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Shifting identities:

A mixed methods study of the experiences of

teachers who are also parents

A thesis submitted to Middlesex University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

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Abstract

This practitioner-based, mixed methods research explores the influence of parenthood on teacher identity; the challenges involved in combining the roles of teacher and parent, and the benefits of being a teacher-parent. Its original contribution lies in the combination of teacher-as-researcher perspective, its in-depth approach to an issue only fleetingly alluded to in policy literature, and its emphasis on providing a balance of male and female voices.

The aim of the research is to provide a framework which may inform future policies at local and national level and to provide practical advice and guidance for teacher-parents on maximising wellbeing and effectiveness in their dual role.

The research investigates the factors, at micro, meso, and macro level that affect teacher-parent identity as discussed in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (1979), and seeks, through a pragmatic approach, to identify school policies that are – or could be – effective in promoting the wellbeing and performance of teacher-parents.

The data is collected through an innovative and contemporary combination of research methods: focus groups at three maintained secondary schools in the London area, questionnaires, and 'netnography'. Online discussion groups provide a wider context for the initial findings. Ethical factors, such as the role of power and hierarchy within the schools, the multiple roles of the researcher, and the issue of informed consent when dealing with sensitive information relating to minors and colleagues, have been taken into account and are critical to the integrity of the research.

This study concludes that, with the right combination of self-belief, pragmatism and support, it is possible to effectively balance teaching and parenthood, and that the benefits that being a parent brings to teachers can and should be nurtured by schools. The study offers a number of recommendations as to how individuals, schools and policy makers might further improve the wellbeing, effectiveness and career progression of teacher-parents.

**This thesis is dedicated to the memory of
Kevin McKellar and Sheila Hamilton
whose fierce intelligence and belief in the power of scholarship to effect positive change
continue to inspire and spur me on.**

I wish they'd been here to see this completed.

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To Helen Diamond and the team at Bloomsbury, who saw the potential for a wider readership on teacher wellbeing - here's to the next exciting journey!

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I explore the experiences of teachers in UK state schools who are also parents, referred to in this study as ‘teacher-parents’. The key question at the heart of this thesis on the shifting identities of teachers as they balance the roles of parent and teacher is:

What is the influence of parenthood on teacher identity, effectiveness, wellbeing and career aspirations?

I explore to what extent, and in what way, ‘being a parent’ influences how this group of teachers see themselves in terms of identity in the classroom, interactions with colleagues, students, and parents of students, and what bearing being a parent has had on teacher-parents’ career aspirations. I aim to identify themes and patterns, as well as uncertainties, paradoxes, and contradictions, with a view to providing a framework on which practical advice and a framework for future policy could be based. This leads to two key subsidiary questions:

What are the factors, at micro, meso and macro level, that affect teacher-parent identity, wellbeing and career aspirations, both positively and negatively?

and

Which policies and practices at micro-, macro and meso level are effective when balancing parenting and teaching and how might these be developed further?

Recent data from the Labour Force Survey (April-June, 2015) conducted by the Office of National Statistics reveals that 46% of practising teachers in UK schools are currently parents of children. The median average number of children for parent-teachers is 2 (see Appendix 3 for full dataset). This data provides a powerful imperative for up-to-date research which sheds light upon the experiences of teacher-parents.

The concept of parenthood here is defined, on a practical level, as an individual, male or female, with direct responsibility of one or more children under the age of 19 and the sample includes

parents of both genders and aims to capture the experiences of a broad a sample as possible in terms of sexuality, ethnicity, age and social background. This study sees the construction of 'parenthood' as inseparable from context; of work-family balance in an era in which 'having it all' is theoretically possible but practically fraught with challenges (Aveling, 2002). 'Parenthood', for the education professional, is seen as inextricably linked to the evaluation and reevaluation of values, priorities and identity. 'Being a parent' encompasses an awareness of key issues such as choice and time – or the dearth of either or both - which invariably accompany the balancing of two potentially all-consuming or 'greedy' (Coleman, 2002, p.153) roles. 'Becoming a parent' holds equal interest for this study, which takes a direct interest in the effect of the transition to parenthood, its shifting influence on teacher-parents' identity, wellbeing and career aspirations.

I have been ever conscious of the questions, 'so what?' and 'for whom?' and have continually returned to these questions in the course of my study. Firstly, I have been impelled to pursue this study by a genuine belief that there is a sense of 'urgency' for the voices of this particular community of teacher-parents to be heard (Chase, 2005, pp.426-427). This study is conducted, against the backdrop of a genuine and growing crisis of teacher recruitment and retention, with wellbeing and work-life balance being cited most frequently as reasons for potential or existing teachers to eschew the profession (Burns, 2016). With the majority of teachers likely to become parents at some point in their careers, this group provides a pertinent lens through which to analyse the challenges and benefits experienced on a day-to-day basis by teacher-parents and to suggest a framework for suggestions as to how the effectiveness and wellbeing of teacher-parents can be maximised.

The research is based around three secondary maintained schools in the London area. In order to achieve data saturation and gain perspectives as diverse as possible within the study, I extended the data collection to include a questionnaire and online blogs to further explore the phenomenon of teachers who are also parents. This has provided a range of perspectives from which to shed light on the central theme of teacher-parenthood, and has added to prismatic and polyvocal nature of the study.

The structure of data collection process broadly, if somewhat simplistically, reflects Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework. Starting with 'I', as researcher-teacher-parent, I have firstly gathered and analysed the stories of colleagues working in my own institution; at 'micro' level. At 'meso' level, I have created opportunities to listen to and interpret the experiences of teacher-parents in schools in the vicinity. In order to generate wider findings, with a view to

attaining data saturation, at 'macro' level, I have reached out to teachers more broadly within the UK through online networks.

There are three key aims to this thesis:

Firstly, to gather and analyse the narratives of the experiences of shifting identities of teacher-parents in England who are also parents, or have parental responsibility for children. By coding and categorising the data through the process of data reduction, I aim to shed light upon the experiences of teacher-parents, with a particular focus on enablers and barriers to wellbeing and performance.

Secondly, I aim to reflect upon the impact of existing policies at local and national level, and how these impact on the lives of teacher-parents.

Thirdly, I hope to achieve a positive impact on the wellbeing and effectiveness of the teachers with whom I have worked directly in my research, as well as in a broader form, by providing practical guidance and a framework for potential future education policies.

Ideas are organised by theme and cross-theme using Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory as a basis, in order to achieve the research aims.

This study is grounded in the literature on teacher wellbeing, teacher identity and the balance of teaching, leadership and family. The research project is therefore shaped and guided by the themes and methodological approaches of these researchers, and the influence of a range of research paradigms can be seen in the project. These include feminism, heuristics, ethnography and life history research. Whilst acknowledging these influences, this thesis defines itself as a pragmatic, mixed methods study, conducted broadly within an interpretive paradigm. A detailed critical analysis of the methodology of the project is undertaken in Chapter 5.

Existing research into teacher-parents includes, most notably, Sikes' *Parents Who Teach* (1997), which has offered an invaluable basis for my research and confirmed the relevance of the topic and its importance for the field. Alongside other key authors in the field, such as Cole (2004) and Bradbury (2007), Sikes' focus is primarily on the voice of the mother-teacher, and the guiding paradigm is one of feminist theory.

As my literature review reveals in Chapter 3, whilst there is a significant body of literature demonstrating the link between teacher wellbeing and effectiveness (Nias, 1996; Day, 1999), the

implications of balancing family life and a career in teaching are not explored in depth. In terms of national policy, issues of workload, stress, burnout, and wellbeing are documented in detail (see, for example, Day 2007). However, there is no direct reference to the influence of parenthood on teacher performance within this contemporary field.

I am conscious of the limitations of the study in its breadth and scope, and that by focusing on teachers who are parents, I am deliberately limiting myself to a specific group - a group which does not, and cannot, represent the whole of the teaching profession. At regular stages of the research journey, possibilities for broadening the focus and new paths have appeared enticing, and the possibility of having a broader impact on teacher wellbeing and effectiveness appeared tempting. As doctoral researcher, I have been conscious of limiting myself to the scope of the study to ensure appropriate academic rigor. It is my hope that by highlighting other research opportunities, this might open up a path for future academic researchers. These possibilities are explored in Chapter 7.

The findings are examined in the light of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, with an examination of the interplay between the micro, meso and macro influences on the lives of teacher-parents. The rationale for this theoretical framework is outlined in Chapter 2.

1.2 Positionality

This study makes an original contribution to knowledge by gathering the stories of male and female teacher-parents and generating distinctive data which highlights the issues faced by contemporary teacher-parents in UK maintained schools. By giving voice to secondary school teachers in the field, and through the adoption of a contemporary combination of research methods, this thesis provides an original contribution to the field of research on teacher identity, wellbeing and career-development.

My professional concern, as a teacher-parent myself, has been to identify not just the challenges faced by teacher-parents when balancing work and family life, but also the benefits and the 'enablers' that 'being a parent' brings to the professional role of teacher. I aim to make suggestions as to how schools might channel these enablers and positive influences and thereby potentially maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of teacher-parents.

My aim is to provide distinctive findings which fill a gap in the existing body of knowledge on teacher identity and wellbeing. This original contribution is essentially twofold. Firstly, my aim

has been to represent, in as balanced a way as possible, given the limitations of study, the voices and experiences of male and female teacher-parents. The scope for further research with a greater focus on male voices was highlighted by Bradbury (2004, p.182).

In my research, I am particularly interested in the contradictions, the paradoxes and the complexities of the balancing of the roles of parent, teacher and, in my case, research, and of the inherent irony of taking on a significant research project in an already full and demanding life.

Within the group of teacher-parents in UK maintained schools, I have aimed to represent as broad a range of voices as possible within the scope of the study, including different ethnic groups, single parents, same-sex couples who are parents, teachers who were parents before they started teaching, those who have become parents since, and teachers representing different levels of responsibility within an institution. The issues which I illuminate, such as balancing priorities, time-management, financial issues, and work-life balance will, I hope, have significance for the broader profession, given the established link between wellbeing and effectiveness (Nias, 1996; Day, 2007; Lovewell, 2012).

Finally, the endorsement given by my colleagues, my family, my friends, and the many contacts I have made through this research project, have continually affirmed for me the importance of this area as worthy of exploration and in-depth analysis.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The interplay of private and public worlds, with the ever-significant influences of politics and culture, led me to adopt Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory as a theoretical framework around which to structure my findings. Bronfenbrenner's theory sees human development as affected by environment at various levels. As an image, this can be represented in concentric circles, with the personal identities and values at the centre – the way in which teachers perceive and define the 'self'. Surrounding this circle are the 'micro' influences on identity - professional relationships, professional values, what drove teachers to enter the profession and what motivates them as they go about the day-to-day work of 'being a teacher'. These are in turn affected by the 'meso' influences: school ethos, school policies and procedures which have a direct impact on the extent to which teachers are enabled to enact their values with a clear sense of impact on the students. Finally, the 'macro' influences, in this context, are the government agendas, the historical context in which we work, and the cultural considerations which have an influence on our work as teachers. A conceptual model of the framework is provided in Figure 1.

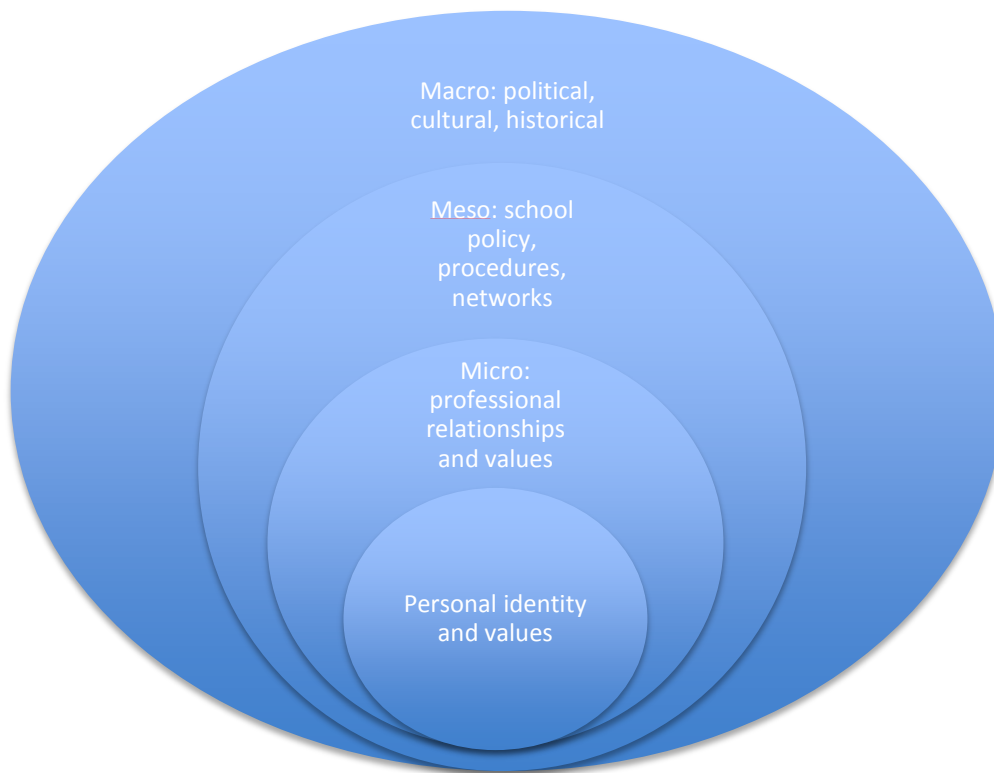


Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

Bronfenbrenner's model provides a clear structure in which to focus on the interplay between these connected and frequently overlapping layers of teacher identity and to explore the conflicts and the burdens, as well as the enablers and the benefits which 'being a parent' present to 'being a teacher'. The theoretical framework for the study is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

A functionalist, utilitarian approach to the issue of teacher performance might suggest that teachers' 'inner lives' should be irrelevant to expectations around day-to-day responsibilities. However, my experiences as middle and senior leader in schools have led to a firm belief in the link between wellbeing and effective performance; in the importance of valuing teachers as 'humans first, professionals second' (Myatt, 2015). This conviction is supported by the findings of a significant body of literature (Nias, 1996; Day, 1999).

For an understanding of 'identity' and the way in which it develops with shifting roles and priorities, I draw on the work of Marcia. Developing Erikson's 'identity status paradigm' (Marcia, 1980), he focuses on the concepts of crisis and commitment and 'identity achievement' (Marcia, 1989), which are directly relevant to the analysis of the transition to parenthood. This a key

turning point which the vast majority of research participants have highlighted as a 'critical incident' or 'epiphany' (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011, p.3) in their career development or the 'life cycle of a teacher' (Sikes, Measor & Woods, 1985, p.23-56). I incorporate the analysis of critical incidents in the context of teachers' stories into my findings.

As author of the research, I investigate the way in which I develop and shape my own identity as female leader and mother in a world of school management in which the hegemony of masculine qualities still dominates. I investigate the ways in which, as school leaders, we are in a position to show our vulnerability and make this part of our strength as leaders. For the teaching profession, mental health issues and the impact of stress continue to be significant factors in relation to attendance and performance. The 'macro' influences, and in particular the ever-changing government agendas and moving goalposts play a significant role here, and the quest for an identity and a set of values as professionals is continually challenged.

1.4 Methodology

I have adopted an interpretive paradigm, with a focus on social interaction and the subjective nature of the 'truths' held by the research participants and the deeper implications and complexity of their narratives and the language they use. Weber's concept of 'Verstehen', which emphasizes the importance of comprehending people's motives and feelings in their social and cultural context (Patton, 1992 p.57) is crucial to this approach (see also Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p.4; O'Donoghue, 2007, p.21; Patton, 1992, pp.56-57).

The research approach combines interpretivism with quantitative data. Mixed methods research embraces both the richness of narrative enquiry and 'stories' of the qualitative approach and the inevitability of a data-driven performativity agenda (Murray, 2012) which tends to define the success of teachers and schools. As a pragmatist, my work is practical, and has a central interest in 'demystifying the research process [to make] it more accessible and potentially more accountable to the public' (Atweh, Kemmis, & Weeks, 1998, p.120).

My key research questions and my methodology led me to a combination of three data-collection methods: focus groups, questionnaires, and 'netnography', the analysis of online talkboards. Each of these methods has clear benefits as well as limitations that must be acknowledged. These issues are explored in detail in the Chapter 5. The combination of the three methods contributes to the aim of ensuring validity and credibility through 'triangulation': the employment of a variety of different methods which reflect the prismatic nature of the research

process by offering converging and conflicting approaches and viewpoints (Patton, 1992, pp.187-189; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, pp.80-82; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, pp.112-116). The collection of data through this combination of methods helps to achieve 'saturation': the representation of multiple points of view with no genuinely new insights (O'Donoghue, 2007, pp.60-61).

1.5 Methodological assumptions

Whilst a detailed autobiographical element falls outside the scope of this research project, it is necessary to acknowledge my role in the research, which shares certain key features with 'insider research'. Therefore an open analysis of my own bias and the influence of my own values on the research was an essential first step in the research journey.

My research-persona is one of pragmatist. As author of the project, I have adopted 'what works' (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2011, p.41) to seek answers to my research questions.

My identity as a researcher is founded around four main assumptions: the rhetorical, the ontological, the epistemological, and the axiological. These are summarised below and subsequently explored in more detail in Chapter 5.

My rhetorical assumptions place me as central to the research. I share my identity as teacher-parent with my research participants, and am driven by a personal imperative to seek insights into how best to balance the roles of parent and teacher. By understanding the phenomenon of teacher-parent identity more deeply, a subsidiary aim of the research is that I too grow in self-awareness and self-knowledge (Moustakas, 1990, p.9). Like Miller (2012, p.129) in my capacity as researcher, I shift between 'insider' and 'outsider' in the research process, necessitating a constant awareness and acknowledgement of the 'hats' I wear. It has been vital to maintain an awareness that my doctoral researcher 'hat' exists alongside other 'hats'; as mother, teacher, middle and senior leader, former Union Representative and Masters tutor, and that these will inevitably influence my perspective on the issue. I consciously acknowledge and examine my bias, my identity as a researcher, and my positionality, as explored in Chapter 5.

My ontological assumptions are based on a belief that reality is reflective, fluid and constructed by social actors (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p.9), and I acknowledge the value and the relevance of both singular and multiple realities.

From an epistemological perspective, I believe that validity and truth are multiple and subjective. The research findings are created through communication between me as researcher with the participants, and between the participants themselves. This draws from the interpretive paradigm, which sees human interaction as a basis for knowledge (O'Donoghue, 2007, pp. 9-10; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p.35).

My axiological assumptions are based around the ultimate desire to 'make a difference' to students' lives, and to the educational community and are shared, I believe, by the vast majority of those in my profession. As stated by a colleague in 1998: 'scratch any teacher hard enough, and they want to make a difference'. The research is driven by key questions around the daily challenges and benefits I share with the research participants and is underpinned by my own values, as a mother and as a professional. These key questions from Josselson have played a central role in guiding my research:

What matters to you? What goals do you pursue? How do you want others to think of you? What do you believe in? What guides your actions? Whom do you love? What values do you hold dear? Where do you expend your passion? What causes you pain? (1998, p.29).

Josselson here makes explicit the axiological element of the self, bringing to the fore the link between our identity and our values. This relates to the research approach insofar as the project necessitates a constant awareness of, and attention to, the way in which my own values and motivations might colour the research findings. An awareness of my positionality also allows me to explore the links between the values which drive me as parent, teacher and research and those which underlie the narratives of the research participants.

1.6 Summary and structure of the study

This mixed methods study is, as stated, an exploration of the experiences of teachers, with a view to ascertaining how parenthood influences teacher-identity. The structure of the study is as follows:

Chapter 2 constitutes a critical analysis of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory and its implications for the research.

Chapters 3 and 4 analyse the existing body of literature on the central themes of teacher identity and the teacher as parent and locate the research questions within the context of research conducted over the last twenty years.

Chapter 5 outlines the methodology and research methods, justifies the choice of each method, and explores the planning, the execution and the analysis of the data collection process, reflecting upon how the chosen methodology impacts upon and overlaps with the research findings.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I explore the findings of my research, with a focus on particular themes, contradictions and paradoxes that are revealed by the perspectives of the research participants, highlighting new and original insights and providing a framework for future policy at local and national level.

In Chapter 8, the conclusion, I draw together the findings to reflect upon how, and to what extent, I have achieved the aims of the project.

CHAPTER 2: Theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I lay out the theoretical framework underpinning this study, which seeks to identify the influence of parenthood on teacher identity, effectiveness and wellbeing. I demonstrate how Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) provides a valid structure within which to examine positive and negative influences on teacher-identity at micro-, meso- and macro- levels. This framework underpins the analysis of the existing body of knowledge, the data analysis, and the subsequent discussion.

2.2 Identifying an appropriate theoretical framework

The theoretical framework constitutes a first step in the clarification of the researcher's fundamental beliefs about the world. The theoretical framework must also be closely connected with the methodology, methods and analysis. Throughout the project, I have maintained an open mind and an awareness of the 'chicken-or-the-egg' controversy (Mertens, 2015), whereby the theoretical framework and literature review continually exert influence on one another. I heed Mertens' advice that, 'if a researcher keeps an open mind throughout the literature review process, a more sophisticated and (often greatly) modified conceptual framework should emerge' (2015, p.106).

In the early stages of the research, I attempted to conceptualise my emerging research concerns, as illustrated in Figure 2. I initially conceived a 'see saw' image, derived from metaphors around 'balancing' which dominate in the literature and discourse on balancing teaching and parenting.

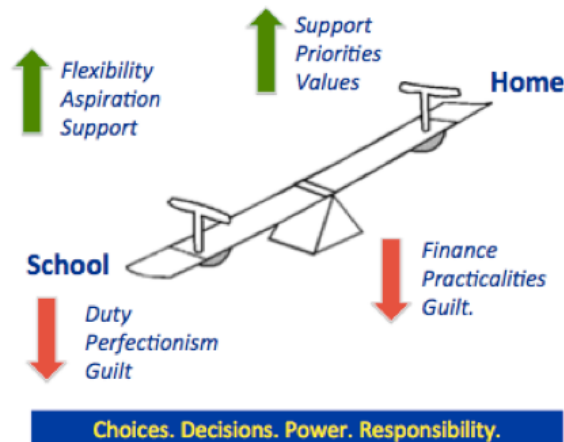


Figure 2: Early conceptual model (2013)

However, it rapidly became apparent that this model did not provide adequate scope for analysis of the complex influences on teacher-parents.

In arriving at Bronfenbrenner's model as an appropriate framework for the project, I reconsidered my stance on teacher identity and my own assumptions. These are explored in detail in Chapter 3: Teacher identity and Chapter 5: Methodology and methods.

Like Gee (2000), I see identity as an 'analytic lens' through which issues in education can be explored, and share his interest in how people interpret power structures and how they affect the personal and professional self. For the purposes of this study, I was particularly drawn by his conceptions of 'affinity identity': 'experiences shared in the practice of "affinity groups" – the group, in this case, being teacher-parents (Gee, 2000, p.100) and of 'institutional identity': 'a position authorised by authorities within institutions (ibid) – in this case, the 'working values' of the participants' schools.

The work of Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) also played a key role in the development of an appropriate theoretical framework. Their concern is with the ongoing integration of the personal and professional and with 'conflict that can lead to friction in teachers' professional identity in cases in which the "personal" and the "professional" are too far removed from each other' (Beijaard et al, 2004, p.109) are of relevance to this project. Beijaard et al highlight, in addition, the importance of the individual within a specific context and the role of agency, with the individual encouraged to be active in their own professional development.

My own worldview and basis for my theoretical framework is reflective of the constructivist view, which emphasises personal meaning, subjectivity and the complex interactions between the individual and his or her environment. Social constructivism is also a key influence, with its view that 'learning and meaning making are a social endeavour. Culture plays a major role in shaping our social realities and learning experiences' (Troudi, 2010, p.4).

In order to conceptualise a model for the purposes of presenting a large amount of complex data, I needed to be able to distinguish between different 'layers' of influence. In addition, throughout the project, I was aware of a need to keep the practical imperative – the desire to be able to provide suggestions to individuals and institutions – as a priority.

Thus, I arrived at the Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of 1979 as the most apt model to represent the challenges and enablers experienced by teacher-parents in UK schools.

2.3 Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory

Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposes that the interplay between the self and the environment is fundamental to identity and human development. He indicates that we are each, directly or indirectly, influenced by more than one type of environment, that each layer is complex, and that conflicts within one environment has ripple effects on the others. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory describes the development of children in the context of multiple societal systems, which, when visually depicted, are concentric circles. The ecological environment can also be conceived as a 'set of nested structures, each inside the next like a set of Russian dolls' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.3)

The limitations of this theory are that it can be seen as somewhat reductive, even positivist in nature, with the individual very much defined by his or her context, with an implied lack of autonomy or power to make changes. However, it should be noted that Bronfenbrenner himself was self-critical of the model later in the career, stating: 'I have been pursuing a hidden agenda: that of re-assessing, revising, and extending—as well as regretting and even renouncing—some of the conceptions set forth in my 1979 monograph' (Bronfenbrenner, 1989, p. 187). He later acknowledged that human development takes place through 'progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the

persona, objects and symbols in its immediate external environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time' (Bronfenbrenner, 1998, p.996). The focus on interaction between the individual and the environment is pertinent to this project, as is the role of time – repeated or enduring actions which influence an individual's wellbeing, effectiveness and aspirations. It should, however, be noted that the theoretical framework for this project, whilst acknowledging later developments in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, is primarily based upon his earlier model.

Another potential limitation of this early model is that it may risk seeming 'rigid, confined to specific boundaries and pretentious to unapproachable by education practitioners' (Walker & Pattison, 2016, p.13). However, like Walker and Pattison, I see the potential for this model to offer a bridge between theory and practice and allowing academic research to explore the potential have a practical influence on teacher-parents' lives. The benefit of the model is that it offers the potential to capture the fluid nature of the interaction between the individual and the environment (Walker & Pattison, 2016, p.12) and thus to capture the complexities of the process of reconciling the roles of parent and teacher.

Using the ecological systems model as a basis, I use the data analysis and subsequent discussion to suggest changes that could potentially be made at each level – within personal relationships, within the institution and at national level – to enhance teacher effectiveness and wellbeing.

For the purposes of this study, with its focus on teacher identity and teacher-as-parent, I have adapted his original model to represent three different 'layers' of influence on teacher identity in figure 3, below:

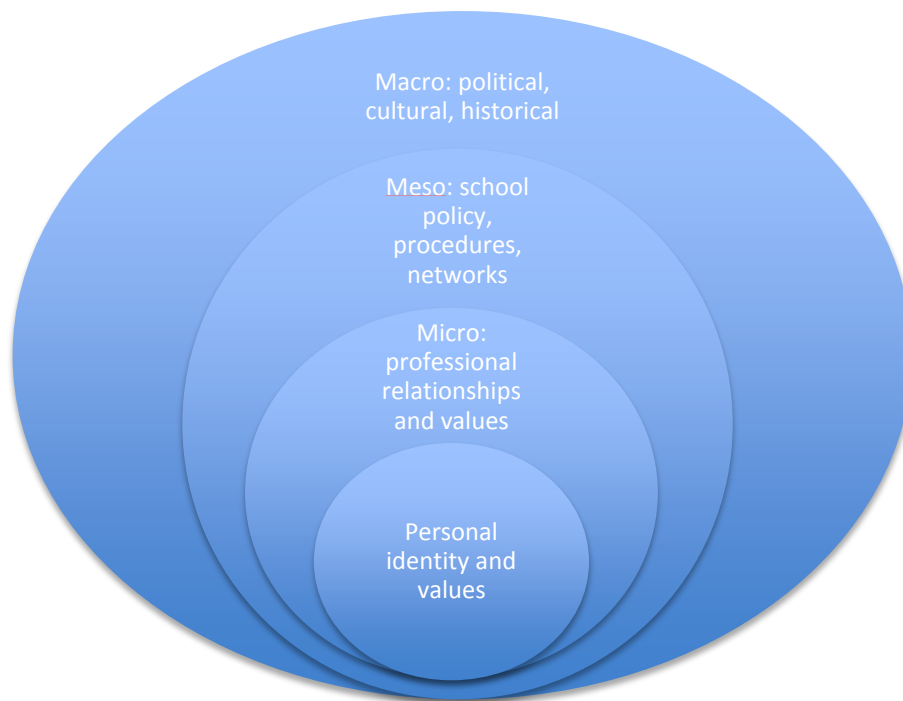


Figure 3: Influences on teacher-parent identity

Taking the teacher 'self' as the centre of the concentric circles, I focus on the interplay between teacher-parents and their environment. The study examines both 'role enrichment' and 'role conflict'. 'Role enrichment' is the term adopted to analyse and explore the implications of the enablers – the positive factors which enhance teacher-parents' sense of effectiveness and success in their daily professional lives and allow them, for example, to pursue their careers in a healthy balance with their family lives. 'Role conflict' is the term adopted to describe the barriers and the challenges faced by teacher-parents when attempting to balance their professional duties with their family lives; the relationships, policies and demands which prevent them from feeling that they are successful in either one of – or both – roles.

Role enrichment and role conflict are analysed at three levels, based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory:

Firstly, I examine the interplay between the individual and their micro-environment; in this case, people with whom the teacher-parent has daily contact and the minutiae which make up teacher-parents' daily routine. This includes close personal relationships, routines, and day-to-day demands and benefits experienced by teacher-parents.

Next, I examine the interplay between the teacher and his or her macro-environment; the wider professional context - the school. This includes the impact on teacher-parents of school policies and procedures and, crucially, of the ethos and culture of the institution.

Finally, I examine the impact of the macro system on teacher identity, effectiveness and career aspirations, including government policy as well as wider perceived societal expectations and takes into account relevant historical and cultural contexts within the UK education system.

Within the innermost circle, I examine portrayals of the teacher 'self' in the existing literature, and through perceptions from research participants, with a particular focus on teacher identity, effectiveness, wellbeing and career aspirations.

CHAPTER 3: Literature review: teacher identity

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I outline key elements of identity theory relevant to this study. This is followed by an analysis of the existing body of knowledge, which looks at the four layers of Bronfenbrenner's system in turn: firstly, the self, values and emotions; secondly, the role of relationships in teacher identity; thirdly, I examine institutional contexts for teachers before going on to outline the key sociological, political and historical contexts and their impact on the identity, effectiveness and wellbeing for teacher-parents.

Finally, I conclude with reflections on the existing body of knowledge and clarify how this thesis makes a unique and important contribution to the field.

3.2 Teacher Identity

My research is informed by a view of identity as 'how we interpret our own existence and understand who we are in the world' (Josselson, 1987, p.30). Identity refers to 'the ongoing and dynamic process which entails making sense and (re) interpretation of one's own values and experience' (Flores & Day, 2006, p. 220). Far from being a single phenomenon, I see identity is 'an amalgamation of prior self-images with present self-evaluations and future ideals' (Miller, 2012, p.22).

The perceived coherence or otherwise of the self will be a key factor when discussing and evaluating the impact of parenthood on teacher identity. There is a consensus in the existing body of literature on teacher identity that 'even as other aspects of the self change, there remains a central set of characteristics that make a person recognisable to others' (Miller, 2012, p.21). This goes hand-in-hand with an acknowledgement of the historical contingency of the 'self' which 'evolves in relation to the structures around us, and the level of agency (or control) we are able to exercise' (Bradbury, 2007, p.84 – see also Zembylas, 2003a). However, there is some debate as to the essential stability of the teacher-self. Researchers such as Nias (2005) and Beijaard (1995) take a modernist stance, viewing the self as relatively stable, and founded upon a core set of values. Like Blustein and Noumair (1996) and Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard,

Bultink and Hofman (2011), they acknowledge the crucial role played by context in identity formation. For authors such as MacLure (1993, p.321), identity is unstable, less coherent than others suggest, pointing to an occupational unease within the profession.

My own perspective is most closely aligned to that of Day (2005), whose extensive longitudinal study into the life and work of teachers brings him to the conclusion that 'the architecture of teachers' professional identities is not always stable, but at certain times or during certain life, career and organisational phases may be discontinuous, fragmented, and subject to turbulence and change in the continuing struggle to construct and sustain a stable identity' (Day & DfES, 2006, p.613). This view is supported by Nias, who highlights a fundamental paradox when describing the 'one over-riding concern' for teachers: 'the preservation of a stable sense of personal and professional identity'; the paradox here is that 'this identity is realised in varying ways and at different times through the developing concerns of our 'situational selves' (Nias, 2005, p.224). During periods where teachers are obliged by conflict and change to adapt their 'situational selves', self-doubt and anxiety are frequently experienced.

Professional identity is influenced by biography and experience – life outside the school. Teachers' professional identity reflects social and policy expectations of what a good teacher is, workplace conditions and relationships, and the educational ideals of the teacher (Day, 2012, p.15). The influence of context on teacher identity is inescapable.

Teacher identity is portrayed by key authors (Sikes, Measor & Woods, 1985; Hargreaves, 2005; Day, 2012) in the field as a journey, through which the teacher experiences varying levels of passion, commitment, wellbeing and effectiveness. For Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985), the constantly evolving and redefining nature of the self lends itself to the view of the teacher-self as playing out various phases in a 'life cycle' (ibid., p.23-56) at different stages of their career. In a similar vein, Day (2012) identifies six Professional Life Phases (PLPs), building on the work of Huberman's study of 160 secondary school teachers in Geneva.

Professional Life Phase (in years)	Key features	Subgroups and tensions
0-3	Commitment: Support and Challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Developing sense of efficacy b) Reduced sense of efficacy
4-7	Identity and efficacy in Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Sustaining a strong sense of identity, self-efficacy and effectiveness b) Sustaining identity, efficacy and effectiveness c) Identity, efficacy and effectiveness at risk
8-15	Managing Changes in Role and Identity: Growing Tensions and Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Sustained engagement b) Detachment/loss of motivation
16-23	Work-Life Tensions: Challenges to Motivation and Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Further career advancement and good results have led to increased motivation/commitment b) Sustained motivation, commitment and effectiveness c) Workload/managing competing tensions/career stagnation have led to decreased motivation, commitment and effectiveness
24-30	Challenges to Sustaining Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Sustained a strong sense of motivation and commitment b) Holding on but losing motivation
31+	Sustaining/Declining Motivation, Ability to Cope with Change, Looking to Retire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Maintaining commitment b) Tired and trapped

Figure 4: Professional Life Phases

Adapted from Day (2012), p.12-13.

Day's model is of particular interest here, because he dwells on the tensions and paradoxes inherent in each stage, and also because he emphasises the fluid nature of these phases, indicating that teachers will move back and forth between and between phases 'for all kinds of reasons concerning personal history, psychological, social and systematic change factors' (Day, 2012, p.14). I would further argue that teachers are likely to move between subgroups within phases from day to day, given the intensity and fluctuating nature of teachers' experiences. In promoting the vital importance of context, Day's model is compatible with the concentric circles adapted from Bronfenbrenner, highlighting depth of influence alongside longevity.

3.2.1 Teacher identity and the transition to parenthood

For the majority of teachers who participated in this study, the transition to parenthood occurred after they became teachers. However, since Sikes' *Parents Who Teach* (1997) was published, there has been little explicit research on the specific impact of parenthood on teacher identity, effectiveness and wellbeing, and this is a gap I seek to address.

Marcia's theory on identity statuses (1989) provides a useful framework in which to examine the impact of the transition from teacher-as-non-parent to teacher-as-parent. Marcia developed Erikson's stages of psychosocial development model by focusing on crisis and commitment in the context of adolescence. He identified four specific elements to the quest for a coherent identity. Taking this model as a basis, I will argue that the transition to parenthood, for teachers with characteristics of 'identity achievement' - a sense of having grasped the essence of their identity through their vocation as teacher - shares certain characteristics with the identity formation type, 'Moratorium', a crisis or exploratory phase during which we struggle to align ourselves to a specific identity (Marcia, 1989; see also Jossleson, 1987, pp.28-33). Baumeister et al explore the impact on our values and aspirations of the 'identity crisis or legitimization crisis', which 'refers to the problem of the multiply defined self whose definitions have become incompatible. It is characterised by severe difficulty in reconciling the demands that follow from diverse commitments' (Baumeister et al, 1985, p.408).

The limitations of Marcia's model can be criticised for its assumption that these stages would occur regardless of context, which is why it is particularly useful to take his views in the context of the conceptual framework provided by Bronfenbrenner, for whom environment is key.

This thesis seeks to address a gap in the existing literature by reflecting upon the impact that becoming a parent has on teachers and their sense of identity, their effectiveness and their sense of wellbeing. I examine to what extent these evolve or differ in transition between the phases represented by the transition to parenthood. In Chapter 3, I will examine in greater depth the influence of parenthood on teacher identity in the existing body of literature.

3.2.2 Emotions and the teacher self

This thesis rests on the shoulders of the growing number of researchers who propose that, for teachers to be truly effective, that they are taken as unique, flawed human beings who embody a set of values, fears, hopes and beliefs which have led them to take up the teaching profession in the first place. In order for them to succeed in the classroom, it is desirable that their colleagues, their managers and their students have a true appreciation of what they represent. The teacher 'self' matters greatly because '...those of us who are teachers cannot stand before a class without standing for something [...] Teaching is testimony' (Paterson, 1991, p.16).

Before examining the relevant themes within this body of literature, it is important to acknowledge the neoliberal view that teaching is a job, much like any other, and that teachers are paid to deliver a service in an increasingly consumer-driven and diverse educational landscape. This is a view which teachers encounter quite frequently, from colleagues, school leaders, the media and government, and there is literature which examines the rapid modernisation and diversification of our education systems (Ball, 2009). However, through my research, I have been unable to identify literature which actively rejects or contests the link between the teacher self and teacher performance. Rather, there is a growing body of literature which seeks to make a clear and distinct link between the teacher as an individual, with his or her unique set of values and emotions, and the teaching profession as a whole.

Teaching is a deeply personal endeavour, which requires high levels of personal investment. At the centre of the concentric circles depicting influences on teacher identity is the 'teacher self'. This thesis is founded upon a body of academic research which suggests that the emotions of teachers play a key role in their performance and ultimately have an impact on outcomes for their students (Nias, 1996; Day & Leitch, 2001; Zembylas, 2003b; Cinamon & Rich, 2005;

Crawford, 2009; Lovewell, 2012.) Teaching is an essentially social enterprise, at the heart of which lie numerous human interactions. In the words of Crawford:

Emotion creates part of the social reality of life in schools and colleges all over the world, because it is human service work, and each and every social encounter can be regarded as some sort of dramatic interaction (2014, Section 5).

This chapter goes on to examine the role emotion plays in teachers' working lives according to the existing body of literature.

3.2.2.1 Teacher burnout

For Marcia, attention to teachers' own psychological development is essential if we are to entrust teachers with the psychosocial growth of our children:

[Schools] will be facilitative to the extent that they are staffed by teachers who are informed concerning psychosocial development, and to the extent that the school settings provide nourishing contexts for the teachers' psychosocial development of identity, intimacy, and generativity (Marcia, 1989, p.409).

The high attrition rate amongst teachers is attributed in significant part to the rate of burnout in the profession (Dee, Henkin and Deumer, 2003, Day, 2007).

On a practical, day-to-day level, the costs to the profession, and the impact ultimately on the students, of failing to attend to staff wellbeing are highlighted by Worklife Support, established by the charity Teacher Support Network. This recent initiative acknowledges the cost to the schools of employee ill-health, 'not just in terms of absence but also the cost of reduced effectiveness as a result of stress and other mental health issues' (Briner & Dewberry, 2007, p.4).

Stress, which features regularly in discussions of 'burnout', is a common symptom of work-life conflict as well as being a regular feature of the working lives of teachers and leaders who work to build and maintain a positive ethos amidst myriad external and internal pressures. Stress occurs, as described by Crawford, when '*emotional dissonance* occurs [...] It's the frequent need to display positive emotions that are not the same as the neutral or negative emotions that you are actually feeling.' For teacher-parents, this is an experience that can overspill from working life into home life, where there can be similar pressures to maintain a positive outward appearance (Crawford, 2009, p.22).

There is an acknowledgement amongst scholars that teaching is far more than just a job from which teachers can walk away at the end of the day, and requires significant emotional investment. There is a paradox inherent in this investment; that 'the personal rewards to be found in [teachers'] work come only from self-investment in it' (Nias 1987 p.181) and the most committed teachers are frequently those at highest risk of 'burnout'. This gives rise to one of the central questions of this research: how can schools support teacher-parents in walking the tricky line between job high performance and job-satisfaction and emotional exhaustion?

Burnout occurs when individuals endure prolonged periods of high-stress, and can include both physical and mental exhaustion (Pillay, Goddard & Wilss, 2005, p.24). Burnout is the result of a significant negative impact on teacher wellbeing and can result in teachers leaving the profession, either temporarily or permanently, with a resulting negative impact on student outcomes. If we fail to pay adequate attention to looking after teachers, the results can be catastrophic, as articulated by Nias:

Teachers have hearts and bodies, as well as heads and hands, though the deep and unruly nature of their hearts is governed by their heads, by the sense of moral responsibility for students and the integrity of their subject matter which are at the core of their professional identity. They cannot teach well if any part of them is disengaged for long. Increasingly, social and political pressures give precedence to head and hand, but if the balance between feeling, thinking and doing is disturbed too much or for too long, teaching becomes distorted, teachers' responses are restricted, they may even cease to be able to teach. [...] Without feeling, without the freedom to 'face themselves', to be whole persons in the classroom, they implode, explode—or walk away (1996, p.305).

Nias emphasises the importance of taking a holistic approach to teacher-identity; to ignore any element of the varying factors which make up the teacher 'self' is to risk losing the teacher from the profession.

3.2.2.2 Teacher wellbeing and resilience

For the purposes of this study, I have chosen to focus my examination of the teacher self on the concept of 'wellbeing' which captures the impact of the various environmental factors on the teacher's identity:

Well-being expresses a positive emotional state, which is the result of

harmony between the sum of specific environmental factors on the one hand, and the personal needs and expectations of teachers on the other hand (Aeltermann et al, 2007, p. 286).

The question of achieving harmony, or balance, between the competing demands of family and school is, for the teacher-parent, particularly pertinent.

For Day (2012, p.17) teacher wellbeing:

is both a psychological and social construct... to achieve and sustain a healthy state of well being, teachers need to manage successfully a range of cognitive and emotional challenges in different, sometimes difficult sites of struggle which vary according to life experiences and events, the strength of the relationships with pupils and parents, the conviction of educational ideas, sense of efficacy and agency and the support of colleagues and school leadership.

Linked to wellbeing is a growing body of literature on teacher resilience (Day 2007; Gu & Day, 2007; Johnson, Down, Le Cornue, Peters, Sullivan, Pearce & Hunter, 2010; Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011). This body of literature could be classified as a response to the somewhat alarming attrition rate amongst teachers in the UK and beyond (Neumark, 2014). This is, in part, attributed to social and political contexts, as explored later in this chapter. The scope of the literature on teacher resilience falls beyond this study, but is worth acknowledging in the context of the influence of parenthood on teacher identity. A recent Australian study on resilience in teachers in the early part of their careers identified five major themes which contribute to resilience:

- relationships
- school culture
- teacher identity
- teachers' work
- system policies and practices (Johnson et al, 2010).

These themes are striking because they reflect the key issues identified in the literature on teacher wellbeing and teacher-parents as well as being reflected in the responses from the participants in this study.

3.2.2.3 Teacher Effectiveness

Many teachers enter the profession with an idealised notion of what they wish to achieve. In order to experience a sense of wellbeing at work, teachers need to feel that they are making a difference, and having a 'positive effect on the lives of their pupils' (Bates, Lewis & Pickard, 2011, p.144). A sense of professional efficacy is fundamental to self-esteem, asserts Nias:

When teachers feel they are effective, assisting the learning of all pupils, keeping pace with their needs, handling the complex demands of teaching with insight and fluid flexibility, they experience joy, excitement, exhilaration and deep satisfaction... By the same token, teachers feel afraid, frustrated, guilty, anxious and angry when they know that they are not teaching well or when they encounter pupils whom they cannot help (Nias, 1996, p.297).

Teachers' sense of effectiveness is comprised of two facets, according to Day (2007): 'as that which was both perceived by teachers themselves and by student progress and attainment which was measured in terms of attainment results over a three year consecutive period' (Day, 2012, p.10). Firstly, on a personal level, there is the cognitive and emotional perception of effectiveness on the part of individual teachers, which includes classroom relationships, student progress and achievement (Day, 2007, p.245). Secondly, there is the 'standards' agenda, which provides a statistical measure of teacher effectiveness according to the grades or levels achieved by individual students and whole classes. In the section on institutional and political contexts below, I examine in more detail how notions of 'effectiveness' have evolved at national level and the impact of this on teacher identity and wellbeing.

3.2.3 Relationships

The first 'layer' of influence on teacher identity, following the Bronfenbrenner model, is that of relationships. The understanding of the self and its relation to the 'other', here, has its roots in the theories of the postmodernist philosophy movement and the post-structuralists, whereby the 'self' is substantive only insofar as it acts as a reflection of its shifting communication with others - its intersubjectivity.

Teaching is a fundamentally sociable enterprise, and a teacher's sense of identity, wellbeing and effectiveness is founded upon thousands of interactions with others each working day.

Paradoxically, teachers can find themselves feeling isolated and solitary where relationships in the classroom and beyond are jeopardised by conflict, self-doubt and perceived ineffectiveness.

A growing emphasis on performativity and external measures of teachers' success – or otherwise – gives a competitive element to the profession, with the potential for fractured relationships within and between institutions. In this section, I will examine the impact on teacher wellbeing of relationships with students, colleagues, with managers and school leaders, with parents, and with fellow professionals beyond their establishments. I will focus on key features of teacher relationships, including trust, empowerment and collaboration. As stated by Nias:

Human relationships are not simply central to teachers' daily experience. They can also become ends in themselves. There is an expectation in many schools that the relationships developed in them will be part of children's learning. By implication, teachers not only experience the emotionality of 'people work' but also carry a responsibility for its quality (2005, p.296).

3.2.3.1 Relationships with students

According to the literature, relationships with students can be the source of the most negative and most positive of teacher emotions. In in-depth interviews with 60 teachers, Hargreaves (2000) found that relationships with students were the most important source of enjoyment and motivation. The relationship with students is the primary impetus for joining, and remaining in, the profession (Spilt, Koomen & Thijs, 2011 p.460) and 'teachers' emotional involvement with students in the classroom is driven by a basic psychological need for relatedness or communion' (ibid, p.470). Close relationships with students are a source of 'intrinsic rewards' for teachers (ibid, p.461). However, teachers 'experience negative effect when relationships are characterized as disrespectful, conflictual, or distant' (ibid, p.461). These experiences are a cause of anxiety and stress (ibid, p.470).

It is crucial that teachers, and those with an impact on their working lives, have a full understanding of this issue:

Teacher educators and school administrators need to understand the critical role of beliefs and feelings about classroom relationships in general and relationships with specific students in teachers' professional development, as well as how teachers can be equipped with interpretative frameworks that promote constructive responses to relational and behavioral difficulties with specific students to avoid escalating conflict and emotional exhaustion' (Spilt et al p.470).

3.2.3.2. Relationships with Colleagues

Relationships with colleagues are also of crucial importance to teachers' effectiveness and wellbeing and have the potential to have both positive and negative emotional impact on individual teachers. Nias (2005) finds that compatibility in beliefs and values is key to productive collegial relationships. For Kottler and Zehm (2000, pp.7-21), the key characteristics of a successful teacher have in common a grounding in relationships with others: charisma, compassion, egalitarianism and a sense of humour. For Yin, Lee, Jin and Zhag (2012), trust in colleagues is a significant predictor of teacher empowerment, which in turn has a significant effect on students' achievement and their other self-perceptions, such as job satisfaction, professional commitment and perceived reform outcomes. Similarly, in a study on fostering resilience in early career teachers, Johnson et al find that a sense of 'belongingness' with relationships based on 'trust, care and integrity' are crucial to new teachers' effectiveness (2010, p.7). Hargreaves (2001, p.523) supports this view, finding that teachers 'seek and enjoy the rewards of affiliation with colleagues seeing personal support and social acceptance as strong sources of positive emotion in their work.' However, Hargreaves goes on to note that these powerful friendships, which 'help build emotional and intellectual understanding' and create 'the energy and commitment for joint work' seem to be 'the exception rather than the norm' (ibid.).

In his study, Hargreaves (2001, p.524) found that conflict between adults within a school 'was the strongest source of negative emotion among teachers in our study and was repeatedly seen as a problem, not an opportunity.'

The management structure of maintained schools in the UK continues to be distinctly hierarchical, and the relationships of teachers with leadership teams is crucial to teachers' identity, effectiveness and wellbeing. Collective teacher efficacy was found by Skaalvik and Skaalvik to be most strongly related to supervisory support, i.e. support from leaders and managers:

Supervisory support was in this study indicated by items tapping teachers' feeling of having cognitive and emotional support from the school leadership, that they could ask the school leadership for advice, and that their relation to the school leadership was one of mutual trust and respect (2009, p.1065).

Once again, a sense of shared values and common goals are seen as of vital importance:

We may speculate that a supportive school leadership provides norms, goals and values that are shared by all or most teachers at school. Working towards the same goals and following the same norms and values may increase the teachers' beliefs of the ability of the faculty of teachers at the school to execute courses of action required to produce given attainments' (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009, p.1066).

This study highlights a clear link between the success of a body of teachers and a sense of a shared vision.

In his 2012 study, Day finds that: 'teachers from across the professional life phases who expressed a positive sense of agency, resilience and commitment in all scenarios spoke of the influence of in-school leadership, colleagues and personal support' (2012, p.16).

Themes of agency and empowerment are widely explored in the literature around teacher identity and wellbeing. Day highlights the way in which 'agency is expressed by the extent to which people can live with contradictions and tensions within [their] various identities' (2005 p.611) and Zembylas, when exploring the political potential of narrative asks 'What possibilities are opened for teachers to become co-authors of their own narratives and performances?' (2003a, p.108). Day echoes this by insisting that, rather than allow themselves to be reluctant victims of structures which oppress them, teachers themselves need to take responsibility for improving the ethos of their institution and, thus, their own working conditions:

Teachers themselves have to be active in creating the work conditions, the opportunities and the spaces in which competence, creativity, risk taking and learning may thrive. This cannot be done in isolation. A professional community has to be built upon the shared insights and the collective experiences of those from within the community (Day, 1999, p.8).

Teacher empowerment is 'a process whereby school participants develop the competence to take charge of their own growth and resolve their own problems' (Bogler & Somech, 2004, p.278) and research has demonstrated that this can reduce levels of teacher turnover and teacher burnout (Dee, Henkin & Deumer, 2003). Empowerment and agency are key themes for a striking number of researchers who adopt the feminist paradigm. These researchers see political forces as perpetuating a patriarchal, hegemonic exercise of control which is all the more pernicious for the fact that many teachers are unaware of it (see for example Sikes & Measor, 1992; Miller, 1996; Hall, 1996; Middleton, 1999; Pflum, 2005; Bradbury, 2007, Thomson & Kehily, 2011).

3.2.3.3 Relationships with parents

Whilst they take up a relatively small proportion of a teachers' working week, the evidence suggests that relationships with the parents of the students they teach can play a key role in the students' progress and outcomes. Regular and productive contact with parents through reporting systems and parents' evenings plays a key role in teachers' duties. A positive working relationship with parents 'may therefore be an important determinant of students' motivation for schoolwork as well as students' behaviour in school' (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009, p.1067). Following on from this, we can argue that good levels of motivation from students have a direct impact on the effectiveness and wellbeing of teachers.

3.2.3.4 Wider teacher networks – the role of technology

In a growing culture of diversification and decentralisation in our current education system, with local authorities playing less of a role and the growth of academies and Free Schools, fewer formal opportunities exist for teachers from different schools to share effective practice. Against this background, recent years have seen a growing phenomenon of online networks of teachers, through forums such as Twitter and Staffrm, in which teachers voluntarily share resources and ideas and participate in public debates. Blogs also play a key role in such networks. From these virtual networks, there has been a rise in informal TeachMeets and 'Un-Conferences'. These networks have played a key role in this research project, evolving from a primary source of research material to being inherent to the development of my methodology and outcomes. The majority of my own publications and conference presentations have come about as a direct result of my participation in such networks. A list of these can be found in Appendix 11.

Velestianos (2013) explores the phenomenon of social media as a new 'gathering space' in which scholars have the opportunity to amplify practice and transform scholarly endeavours. In contrast to the structure of the working school environment, these communities are distinctly non-hierarchical. In a study of online Teacher Learning Communities (TLCs), Jong concludes that 'the examples given suggest that promoting more equality of teachers and experts can contribute to improved teachers' involvement in online TLC-s and, for that reason, to a successful implementation of innovations' (2012, p.128).

In an environment in which 'functionalist performativity demands' (Day, 2012, p.8) and a focus on learning-by-doing in a classroom environment, Day warns that teachers fail to develop adequate reflective skills and emotional understanding of their role. Practitioners have responded to this phenomenon by capitalising on online opportunities. An example of this is the reflection-as-action model promoted by Boulton and Hramiak (2012), in which trainee teachers are asked to blog after teaching. This allows them to develop the reflective aspect of their professional identity by reflecting as a community.

The potential of such communities to have a positive impact on teacher effectiveness and wellbeing should not be underestimated, and teacher participation is growing at an exponential rate.

3.2.4 Institutional and National Contexts

Teachers face a wide variety of accountability measures which are in a state of flux in the light of regular changes to education policy at government level. These have a direct impact on teachers in the classroom with, for example, the curriculum, assessment criteria and the format of examinations undergoing wholesale changes at every level in every subject between 2015 and 2017. The advent of new GCSE and A Level exams is accompanied by an ever-changing set of progress measures for schools which are crucial to a school's overall grading by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and its wider credibility.

Performance related pay for teachers is now well-established, with progress and achievement of students in the classroom being linked to salary scales and inextricably tied to prospects for career progression. Meanwhile, capability procedures to dismiss teachers who are failing to meet the required levels of compliance and standards have been tightened so an underperforming teacher can be dismissed in as little as four weeks.

Researchers find that increasingly rigid all-pervasive performativity agendas do dictate the minutiae of our working lives and this saps rather than builds teacher morale (Day 2007, p.258; Walker & Taylor, 2013). Five years on, in *The New Lives of Teachers*, this crisis appears to have intensified, according to Day:

In the new lives of teachers, schools and classrooms have become, for many, sites of struggle as financial self-reliance and pressure for ideological compliance have emerged

as twin realities. Externally-imposed curricula, management innovations, and monitoring and performance assessment systems have been introduced but have often been poorly implemented and have resulted in periods of destabilisation, increased workload, intensification of work, and a crisis of professional identity for many teachers who perceive a loss of public confidence in their ability to provide a good service' (Day, 2012, p.8).

There is, finds Zembylas, a distinct lack of collegiality and mutual support in the profession:

In the United States and England, school teachers teach in contexts that encourage individualism, isolation, a belief in one's own autonomy, and the investment of personal resources (Zembylas, 2003a, p.119).

Those who refuse to conform to the 'norm' risk isolation and being seen as eccentric and potentially disruptive:

The emotional rules developed in schools and legitimated through the exercise of power are used to "govern" teachers by putting limits on their emotional expressions in order to "normalize" them and thus turn appropriate behaviour into a set of skills, desirable outcomes, and dispositions that can be used to examine and evaluate them (Zembylas, 2003a, p.119 – see also Gee, 2000, p.113).

The anxiety associated with the urge to conform can be related back to Marcia's work on identity crises and 'conditions of worth' – those who choose to conform in a way that contradicts their essential values do so out of 'danger of rejection by those on whom [they] depend most heavily for affection and esteem' (Marcia, 1989, p.406). This links back to the contradictions explored above, which are a source of vulnerability for committed teachers.

Whilst there are numerous interpretations of the invisible structures, the 'puppet strings' that influence our sense of identity, the key here is to accept that such structures exist, to confront and identify them, and by doing so, to rid them of some of their potency. In other words, rather than allowing a sense of being judged to define our sense of worth, we question the very premise upon which these judgements are based and are thus liberated and free to formulate our own success criteria - to be faithful to our core values.

Ongoing inequalities of opportunity in society are also a key focus for our schools, with the attainment gap between privileged students and those with fewer social advantages still stark. In areas of deprivation, teacher recruitment and retention is a serious problem, and Day finds that 'teachers in more disadvantaged communities have their commitment and resilience more persistently challenged than others (2012, p.14).

Government reform in education has been drastic in the last two decades, leading to the increased risk of fragmentation as a result of repeated reforms (Gunter, 2010). Following the introduction of the academies programme, Gove's focus on school autonomy and parental 'choice' (2014) has led to a further diversification of our education system, with the advent of Free Schools and the reduction in local authority involvement. Day finds that 'many are confused by the paradox of decentralised systems (i.e. local decision-making responsibilities), alongside increased public scrutiny and external accountability, and the associated bureaucratic burdens' (Day, 2012, p.9). Furthermore, the consequences of these reforms, according to the NFER Teacher Voice Panel 'could lead to increased social segregation between schools and may not contribute to improved educational outcomes for less privileged children' (Lewis & Pyle, 2010, p.17).

This is an environment of constant change and fluctuation, necessitating high levels of flexibility and resilience amongst teachers. How well they cope with these reforms is closely linked to the points in their lives and careers they have reached, according to Kelchtermans (2005, p.1002). However, it is perhaps no surprise that teacher attrition rates are high and, some would argue, at crisis point, with a reported one in four newly qualified teachers leaving the profession in the first five years and some London schools losing 40% of their teachers each year (Neumark, 2014). To examine the experiences of teacher-parents who have chosen to leave the profession fell outside the realms of this study, but this would be an area well worth pursuing in future research.

Within this context, the key challenge for school leaders is to balance supporting their teachers with a clear sense of accountability. This is a delicate balance, necessitating high levels of emotional intelligence and clarity of communication. School culture, or 'the way we do things around here' (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996, p.37) is absolutely crucial to the success of any school. Johnson et al argue that resilience is enhanced when: 'positive school cultures are developed that actively promote collaborative relationships, professional learning communities, educative forms of leadership and dialogic decision-making' and where 'systems' policies and practices show a strong commitment to the principles and values of social justice, teacher agency and voice, community engagement and respect for local knowledge and practice' (2010, p.7).

For Crawford, one of the key roles of school leaders is 'to see that the people that make up the organisation are valued and recognised'. Crawford's humanistic perspective on leadership focuses on 'the centrality of people and the leadership to any well-run organisation' (2014, section 1). This point is particularly pertinent in the light of the discussions which take place with teacher-parents and the resulting findings of the research, which in many respects see the day-to-day minutiae of human interaction as even more crucial for the wellbeing and effectiveness of teacher-parents than more broader-reaching policies or initiatives.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter reflects a fundamental belief, based on a significant and credible body of research, in the inextricable link between wellbeing and effectiveness. In addition, the key role played by the people who influence teachers, from closest relatives and friends through to decision-makers at government level, is highlighted. I will use a similar structure, starting with personal perceptions and experiences and panning out to examine wider socio-political influences, to examine the findings from my data collection.

In the next chapter, I will examine the body of literature around teacher-parents with a focus on the balancing of the two roles: where this balance is successful and where it fails, and examining the impact of institutional practices on the effectiveness of parents who teach.

CHAPTER 4: Literature review: teacher as parent

4.1 Introduction

An analysis of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey, January-March 2013, found that, of 2243 practising teachers, 45.5% were also parents with one fifth parents of children of two years old or younger. 69.6% of teachers who are parents are also female. The significance of this figure gives real weight to this study into the impact of parenthood on teacher identity, wellbeing and career progress.

The transition to parenthood, for many teachers, is accompanied by an in-depth re-examination of identity and values:

With the birth of my daughter, my first-born, the world became a different place and “I” a different person within it. The perceived stability surrounding the roles in my life as daughter, woman, wife, lecturer and friend were totally upturned by the birth, after a month in hospital, of my daughter (Cole 2004, p.78).

Like Cole (2004, p.187), I am particularly interested in teasing out the paradoxes and contradictions inherent in balancing teaching and parenthood.

This chapter falls broadly into three sections. In the first, I undertake an analysis of the influence of post-structuralism feminist research on this research project, highlight its relevance to the experiences of teacher-parents and justify an alternative perspective which allows me to focus more equally on the experiences of men and women.

Secondly, in the light of the full body of literature referenced, I then examine the balancing of the two roles of teacher and parent and tease out key themes. I then examine role enrichment – the successful balancing of the two roles, before moving on to examine themes around role conflict – where the balance is unsuccessful. I then move on to a more practical examination of the impact of institutional values and culture and school leadership before going on to examine the practicalities and the minutiae of daily life which can have a significant impact on teacher-parents’ effectiveness.

4.2 Post-structuralist feminist perspectives

As researcher, I have been explicit about my identity as a pragmatic researcher with the aim of representing both male and female experiences and offering an original perspective on the experiences of teacher-parents. The existing body of literature is dominated by the crucial and urgent voices of post-structuralist feminist researchers. In the following section, I indicate how their influence is key, both in my own experience as teacher-leader and parent and in the findings and conclusions of this project. These are perspectives which embody many of the complexities and paradoxes which I embrace within this piece of insider-research. Feminist perspectives place an emphasis on the link between context and agency, in common with the theoretical framework adopted in this project, which emphasises the dynamic interaction between the individual and his or her environment at micro-, meso- and macro- levels

My determination to pay equal attention to male and female voices does not preclude a concurrence with Aveling (2002, p.277) that it would be 'naïve to assume that gender equality has been achieved'. Moreau, Osgood and Halsall (2007) highlight the continuing gender equalities inherent in teaching, despite the fact that schools are perceived to be 'feminised' environments. Coleman (2002) finds that, not only do patriarchal structures remain intact (p.150), but female headteachers have experienced overt discrimination and even sexual harassment (p.92-93).

Themes of juggling and balance abide in this body of research, as in my research project. Hall found that all of her research participants experienced gender inequalities and struggled with reconciling the conflict between career and family:

These derived from both their own and other's view of the compatibility for women of career and parenthood; of partner's and own career; of ambition and femininity; of professional and personal goals of teaching and management; and of management and womanhood. Their working lives showed the constant juggling necessary to reconcile these apparent oppositions, either by refusing to recognize their oppositional characteristics, or reinterpreting or reformulating them to work in harmony (Hall, 1996, p.47).

Aveling's longitudinal study indicates that young women's experiences of reality are at odds with the concept of 'equal opportunities', with her findings indicating that 'work patterns essentially replicated the employment patterns of women of an earlier generation' (2002, p.277). Aveling highlights the 'conflicting messages and expectations' at the heart of young women's

experiences, 'that suggest, on the one hand, that to be a good mother, women need to stay home with their children, and, on the other hand, position women as being fully human only when they follow a challenging lifelong career' (ibid).

As in this research project, the concept of 'choice' – to work or stay at home; to pursue one's career to its pinnacle or maintain a healthy work-life balance – is highlighted in this body of literature. Aveling (2002, p.265) emphasises the fact that what is perceived as a 'choice' to work is in fact, for many women, an economical necessity. Strikingly, at headteacher level, women appear far less likely to have children than men (Fuller, 2013, p.25). Coleman finds that a significant proportion of female headteachers appear impelled to make a 'choice' between career and family, and to 'effectively [opting] out of combining the two' (2002, p.51). In her 2005 study, Coleman finds that just 60% of female headteachers are parents compared to 90% of their male counterparts (2005, p.3), with many also choosing not to marry and a significantly higher proportion experiencing broken marriages (Coleman, 2002, p.51). Depressingly, according to this significant body of literature, the decision to pursue one's career ambitions would appear to be at significant costs to personal relationships.

Overwhelmingly, this body of research indicates that, regardless of their professional status, women are more likely to take on the bulk of responsibility for childcare and domestic duties (Coleman, 2002, p.153; Fuller, 2013, p.25. The need to juggle these responsibilities with professional commitments led to an overwhelming perception by women interviewed by Moreau et al that 'a management position was hardly compatible with family responsibilities' (2007, p.242). Despite the fact that these are apparently 'family friendly' policies, career breaks and the return to work on a part-time basis have also been identified as factors in the under representation of women at management level. These policies would appear to draw upon:

a traditional construction of a woman's role, implicitly relating to a woman as the main childcarer (and to the opportunity teaching offers to combine work and family demands) rather than seeing a woman as pursuing a career in her own right (Moreau et al, 2007, p.243).

For women who do become leaders, many seem to attribute this to chance or luck rather than a determined and focused career plan more frequently associated with male leaders:

A strong feature of interviewees' discourse is their many references to serendipity to make sense of their own career progression, something which largely contrasts with the construction of gender issues as political and of gender as power structure in gender theories (Moreau et al, 2007, p.247)

It is noteworthy that as female researcher of this project, I have in fact attributed my own research, alongside my career progression to 'serendipity' in Chapter 5.

Fuller (2013, p.30) highlights the fact that issues of equity are not merely restricted to gender, with ethnicity, sexuality and class being worthy of consideration. This research project, whilst aiming to cover as diverse a range of teacher-parents as possible, acknowledges that there are significant further avenues for research in these areas. Appendix 8 offers a breakdown of survey respondents, of which data on specific groups could be used by future researchers.

When balancing the roles of teacher and parent, according to two focus group participants, 'someone has to suffer' and 'something has to give'. Significantly, these perspectives were both offered up by male teacher-parents. The post-structuralist feminist perspective devotes itself to the relative 'suffering' of women in this context. This project aims to demonstrate that the influence of parenthood on men is distinctive, intense and equally worthy of analysis. A large proportion of the feminist literature is set in the context of primary schools. In seeking to provide an alternative and original perspective, I argue that the primary context of my research in a secondary school in a London comprehensive with its vibrant and diverse community and its progressive ethos, requires a new approach to reflect its genuine focus on emotional resilience, inclusivity at all levels and emotional intelligence (School Development Plan, 2012).

4.3 Roles

The issue of teacher-parent identity fits into a broader societal issue which is regularly the topic of discussion in the media and amongst groups of mothers. On 19 March 2012, Radio 4's Woman's Hour ran a 'phone-in' entitled 'Stay at home or go to work?' during which a caller called Natalie expressed the view that this is such a taboo subject that, in the classroom, 'no teacher can talk about [it].' Not only does this reveal another 'gap' that needs to be filled, in both academia and wider society, it also highlights the importance of teachers' roles in preparing young people for a world which entices them with its 'have-it-all' aspirations. However, this is a society which demands the ability to enact numerous roles to ever-higher standards of perfectionism and, for all its relative affluence and comfort, it could be argued, demands higher degrees of resilience, adaptability and tenacity than previous eras. By raising this issue with the teaching community, we encourage them to consider how the issue might be raised in the classroom.

4.3.1 Balancing roles

At different stages of our lives, we each inhabit numerous different roles - friend, student, daughter, mentor, neighbour, or colleague – frequently without needing to stop and consider the implications of the interplay between these different roles. Having established, in our discussion of teacher identity, that teaching is a unique profession in the sheer demands it makes on the ‘self’, it seems unsurprising that the initiation to parenthood, and the ensuing commitments, frequently demand a re-evaluation of our priorities, values, and aspirations. Cinamon, Rich and Westman in their research on teachers’ work-family conflict describe the life changes associated with teachers’ transition to parenthood as follows:

One’s occupational identity as a teacher is not a total defining factor; it cannot be separated from other identity issues. Rather, it is part of a complex psychological and social process whereby one adopts, in a dynamic manner, varying degrees of commitment to and responsibility for an array of life roles. As one passes through the different stages of life, the relative importance attributed to the various roles will likely change along with the sense of commitment to them. Indeed it is possible that as life circumstances evolve, a corresponding transformation may occur in a teacher’s work–family profile classification (2007, p.374).

This is reminiscent of Marcia’s life-crisis research, in that it highlights the choices and dilemmas inherent in trying to define who we are and what we stand for.

As a teacher-parent and doctoral student, it is apparent to me people who have undertaken several demanding roles (some by choice) that the issue is not with the number of roles themselves, nor even, necessarily, with their demands on our time and energy. Though these are clearly crucial factors, the key issue is our attitude to these roles and the emotions associated with them. Feldman, Sussman and Zigler refer to the ‘close links between the individual’s attitudes toward a role and functioning in that role’ (2004, p.462). If we can balance the roles effectively, this has a resulting positive impact on parents’ agency and efficiency (Tsushima and Burke, 1999, p.186).

Our subjective perception of the relative importance of the two domains of work and home is a ‘critical determinant of work-family contact’ because it logically follows (and is supported by the evidence) that ‘the more important a role is for an individual, the more time and energy he or she will invest in it, allowing less time and energy for other roles’ (Cinamon & Rich 2005, p.367).

From an employer's perspective, it is important to note that perceptions of career centrality – as well as of wellbeing, a sense of worth, and aspirations – before the transition to parenthood are directly related to the relative success of work-adaptation (Feldman et al 2004, p.262).

Conversely, researchers concur in their findings that high levels of work-family conflict have a direct and negative impact on performance at work (Grice, McGovern, Alexander, Ukestad & Hellerstedt, 2011, p.20), and maternal ambivalence to the work role have a negative impact on the maternal role, being linked to depression and stress (Feldman et al 2004, p.262).

The research on dual earners supports the decision to focus on both genders: Felman et al established that there was essentially no difference between maternal and paternal work adaptation following childbirth (2004, p.470). Whilst most researchers acknowledge that the physical and emotional impact of the transition to parenthood is greater for women (see Michaelian, 2005; Hall, 1996), Feldman et al (p.460) make the crucial point that high marital support is one of the main factors associated with low work-family interference for new parents. By examining and shedding light upon teacher-parents' unique ways of balancing the different roles in their lives, I believe that the whole school community will ultimately be positively affected.

4.3.2 Role conflict

The discussion on feminist post-structuralist literature in 4.2, above, serves to lay the ground for this section on role conflict. Pflum (2005) and Bradbury (2007), in their doctoral research on balancing teaching, leadership and parenting, take a feminist perspective and highlight the fundamental gender inequality in teaching. The feminist discourse and dichotomies between opposing extremes such as ambition and femininity, and management and womanhood (see also Hall, 1996, p.47) are shown to be a reality for female teachers and leaders.

Pflum effectively summarises the conflict at the heart of committing oneself to two or more demanding roles:

The main problem they face is that, according to societal expectations, neither job can each be done well without one hundred percent dedication, caring, and love. As things currently stand, if mother teachers continue to give of themselves completely (as demanded by society) to their teaching jobs, time is taken away from their child and they are considered "bad mothers." But if they draw the line and decide to only work the number of hours that they are required by their teaching contracts, they are considered "bad teachers" (Pflum, 2005, p.6).

Guilt is a theme which dominates the literature around teacher-parents (see Hall, 1996; Nias, 1996; Sikes, 1998; Oberman & Josselson, 1996), and is a natural feeling associated with the process of exploring alternative identities (Marcia, 1989, p.406). However, guilt - particularly for teacher-mothers - rather than being transient and part of a process, appears to be recurring and pervasive and, if allowed to persist and reach its most negative conclusion, leaves mother-teachers (in this case, those in primary schools) in an impasse, in which it is 'almost impossible to succeed in any way' (Sikes, 1998, p.95 – see also Oberman & Josselson, 1996; Hall, 1996).

There is a powerful warning here – by trying to have it all, we risk ending up with nothing; we risk imploding and negating the very identity, values and aspirations that have driven us to succeed.

The emphasis on freedom and possibility in an affluent society offers women the potential to 'have it all', but 'superwoman syndrome' risks serious costs closer to home, warns Bradbury, drawing upon her own experience in a way which chimes strongly with my own:

At home I had to be superwife and mum in order to prove that going out to work did not disadvantage the children [...]. I had to prove this to myself as much as to anyone else. At school I had to prove that nothing from home would ever get in the way of school (Bradbury, 2007, pp.82-83).

Despite the overwhelming emphasis on the relative importance of family over work in the literature, in teaching, a job which requires a brusque, positive, efficient public image and which involves thousands of interactions per day, it is necessary to suppress or compartmentalise any underlying doubt or guilt over role strain. The perceived pressures to appear efficient and effective at work – to reassure oneself, and others, that one's performance has not been impeded by parenthood are frequently exacerbated by exhaustion due to a dramatic change in priorities and, frequently, in sleep deprivation (Meltzer & Mindell 2007).

It is therefore little wonder that emotions that have been suppressed can easily spill over at home. Paula, a mother and headteacher interviewed by Bradbury admits, 'It was my husband who saw the tears, who saw the upset. It was my girls who saw me ready to give up' (Bradbury 2007, p.91). This is a worrying trend which is reflected in the feminist literature. In Hall's research, many female school leaders and mothers 'were concerned to protect others' time, but were also unwilling to admit any need for help themselves' (Hall, 1996, p.58). My aim in this research has been to offer a realm in which such issues can be explored in a non-judgemental

and trust-based forum; at the very least, this has allowed respondents to make their voices heard, and it has the potential to have a real impact on school policies and procedures.

The need for such research is further supported by a further - and rather more disturbing - irony unveiled by Bradbury, who found that, on occasion, the harshest critics of teacher-parents struggling to balance the dual role were indeed other teacher-parents (in this case, mothers) 'who were clearly looking for any opportunity to show that no one could succeed in handling these identities' (Bradbury, 2007, p.83. See also Pflum, 2004 p.2; Cole, 2004, p.61). In her study, Hall also found that hostility towards women from other women was a worrying problem (1996, p.59).

Crawford describes how sustained feeling of stress 'can be associated with ill health, because eventually individuals suffering with emotional dissonance lose the capacity to regulate their own emotion and can become unable to work' (2009, p.22-23). Pflum's experience reflects this; her experience of balancing teaching and parenting is so negative, that she takes the decision to leave the teaching profession and stay at home to look after her children. This is a decision mirrored in the contemporary situation in UK schools, which sees teacher attrition, as we have seen, as a growing problem.

Pflum depicts this as a 'choice', and one that she resents being 'forced' to make (2005, p.11). This necessitates a return to the issue of 'choice', highlighted in the feminist literature. Marcia, more than twenty years ago, highlights the relationship between economic considerations and identity development, going on to explain that '[p]ermission to explore a number of ideological and occupational alternatives as well as the provision of a variety of viable niches for commitment is a function of the relative prosperity of a particular society (Marcia 1989, p.408). Cole, in 2004, challenges the 'middle class' discourse of what counts as 'natural mothering' with the practical reality that '[for] many women there is little economic option but the return to work' (Cole 2004, p.61). This I suspect to be the reality for the majority of my teacher-parents, and is one of many factors which make life extremely challenging. My overarching aim is to acknowledge and explore these difficulties whilst drawing out the positive elements of teacher-parent identity with a view to asserting an ultimately optimistic outlook for parents who teach.

4.3.3 Role enrichment

There is a significant body of literature which offers a positive view of the dual role of teacher-parent (Sikes, 1997 and 1998; Cosford & Draper, 2002; McFarlin, 2007) and celebrates the cross-fertilisation of skills and competences from one role to the other.

Two main strands emerge when considering role enrichment between parent and teacher, and will be worthy of deeper exploration in coming research: the first is the impact of being a parent on teacher-persona and relationships in the classroom which (supported by my own pilot study) is found to be overwhelmingly positive. See for example, the findings of Sikes:

One interpretation of what these teachers are saying is that once they had their own children their professional knowledge, consciousness and practice was, to some extent, altered. It was no longer possible for them to 'other' or as Teresa put it, to 'objectify' their pupils. That is, they could not see them as separate, distinct and different beings. Their theoretical knowledge was humanised by their practical and immediate knowledge of their own children (1998, p.93).

The second main strand is the impact of being a parent on relationships with pupils' parents. As teacher-parents, according to Sikes, we tend to be 'less likely to perceive other parents as awkward, difficult or obstructive when they came to school with their troubles or questioned practices and procedures' (ibid, p.95). Sikes' predominantly positive perspective includes the assertion that teacher-parents tend to be less judgemental of other parents (ibid, p.95). As a practitioner, I would question whether being a parent, on occasion, makes us rather less accepting, more impatient, and more judgemental in certain situations, like the mother-teachers above who showed a lack of support to their colleagues.

Michaelian, like Pflum, wrote a doctoral thesis on mother-teacher identity. Her context is similar to Pflum's (2005, in the US) and like Pflum, she acknowledges and explores the difficulties and tensions inherent in balancing the two roles. Unlike Pflum, she was still teaching at the time of her writing, and, for me, this gives greater weight to her conclusions:

Teaching and parenting simultaneously is a difficult task, but apparently one that can be accomplished successfully. This is a concept that needs to be circulated among educators so that those undertaking the dual roles will not be daunted by the prospect of attempting to merge the two. While difficult, the undertaking can be as rewarding as it is complex. Many are doing it, and it need not be an isolating experience (Michaelian, 2005, p.203).

In the final section, I will go on to explore implications for school management and ethos and take a brief look at international perspectives with a view to suggesting ways in which we can capitalise upon the positive experiences of teacher-parents.

4.4.1 Institutional identity and working values

Marcia highlights the crucial role played by the working environment in identity development: 'In order for identity achievement to be possible for an individual, he/she has to be located in a social context that can afford to provide its members with opportunities for exploration' (Marcia, 1989, p.408-9).

The key role of the employer for the parent-professional has key implications for institutional identity, or the culture of an institution and its working values. Day insists that:

[The] culture of the school, its internal dynamics and organisation, enable or constrain the achievement of 'satisfaction', 'commitment' and 'motivation' and impact upon teachers' constructions of their teacher identities and the acceptance or rejection of the identity 'teacher' as an aspect of self (2005 p.606).

Schools display varying degrees of support and flexibility with regard to parents who teach as conveyed by Hunt (2002):

[S]ome heads feel that it is imperative to establish goodwill among staff who have childcare commitments - "It's unfair to deny staff the pleasure of seeing their own child's Christmas performance or penalise them if their children's schools hold school-time meetings," says one head. Others feel that it is an integral part the teachers' lot to sacrifice their own family commitments if there happens to be a clash with the school diary.

An aspect of my research as a practitioner will be to examine existing policies at the main school where the research is based and beyond with a view to ascertaining which are the most effective in retaining our best teachers after they become parents.

4.4.2 School leadership and management

On the subject of the link between morale and performance for teachers, Day writes of the need for a working environment 'which is less alienating, less bureaucratically managerial, less reliant on crude measures of performativity' and for a leadership which is 'supportive, clear, strong, emotionally and socially intelligent, and passionate about sustaining the quality of their

commitment’ (Day, 2007, p.258). Cinamon and Rich highlight the role of educational leaders in acknowledging the different roles played by employees and the varying relative importance they attribute to these. They warn that:

Administrators must find means to create appropriate professional climates to enable good teachers to realize their career and family goals whether they attribute primary importance to their career or to their family or to both. Otherwise, the teachers will suffer from stress and frustration and may leave the profession or function at sub-optimal levels (2005, p.374).

The school where the research was first based has the wellbeing of every member of the school community at the heart of its ethos, as noted by the most recent Ofsted report (DFE, 2011, p.8) and evidenced by the existence of a dedicated wellbeing team and a recent focus on working values and ‘dignity at work’. Our core purpose, we are reminded (see school development plan) as educators, is to get the best from every student at the school. Driving every leadership decision, however, as the head teacher reminds me in a pilot interview on 23 April 2012 has to be value for money and an impact on standards. Results, whether we like it or not, are our ‘bread and butter’, as the headteacher tells the schools’ Middle Leaders on 7 March 2012. Ultimately, any decision related to wellbeing or teacher-welfare cannot be justified unless it has a measurable and positive impact on student outcomes.

At the initial site of study in 2012, a significant proportion of responsibility-holders at the school who are also parents held part-time posts. In the previous six years, all responsibility holders who became parents retained their responsibility since becoming a parent. Of this total of ten managers, the Head made the observation that, in contrast with the bleak picture painted by much of the literature, 97% are ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ teachers, as judged by Ofsted criteria. Of even greater significance is the fact every member of this group improved [his or her] performance since becoming a parent: ‘the results’, says the headteacher, ‘speak for themselves’. This school had clearly hit upon an extremely effective formula, and one which I have not seen reflected in any of the literature on teacher-parents. The narratives of these parents, and other teacher-parents across the school will help us to clarify which strategies were effective in achieving this aim.

4.4.3 Practicalities and logistics

Being a teacher-parent brings with it a plethora of logistical and practical challenges that schools are in a position to influence.

Of these, the most significant appear to be working hours, parental leave, and childcare. At the school where this research was first based, just under a quarter of teaching staff worked part-time, with job-shares still being relatively rare. Of these staff, twenty were female and five were male. The vast majority of these have reduced their hours since becoming a parent. As emphasised above, these decisions are never truly altruistic – in return for a reduction in hours, the expectation is that performance will not be adversely affected.

Research on the issue of part-time working hours and work-family balance is dominated by voices from Northern Europe, which offers a more progressive model from which we can potentially learn. It is worth noting that, contrary to much of the ‘hype’, researchers have found that for new mothers, going back to work had a positive impact on both mental and physical health (Grice et al 2010, p.25; Cole, 2004, p.61). According to the recent data acquired from the ONS (April-June 2015), 43.9% of a total of 4948 UK teacher-parents surveyed do not currently work full-time hours.

Literature in the field demonstrates flexible hours have a positive impact on new mothers (Feldman et al, 2004, p.475 and p.461; Keizer, Dykstra & Poortman, 2010, p.436). Writing more recently, Fox, Pascal and Warren take this further, advocating the ‘creation of political and social environments in which care-giving and labour market participation are shared equally between women and men’ (2009, p.315). A note of caution, however, is sounded by Cinamon et al, who found a correlation between flexible working hours and work-family conflict (2007, p.258), indicating that in professions like teaching, in which ‘spillover’ between work and home are likely, flexible hours must be implemented with due care. Whilst in theory, flexible working hours may seem like a positive way forward, the complexities of implementing these on a practical level are reflected in data from the ONS (April-June 2015), which reveals that only 4.4% of teacher-parents surveyed are currently working flexible hours.

The introduction of paid parental leave in Scandinavia where all working parents are entitled to 16 months of paid leave per child has ‘been instrumental in changing employers’ views on fathering, creating an accepting corporate atmosphere toward parenting and increasing fathers’ participation in childcare and family life’ (Feldman et al 2004, p.461). Writing in the TES, Hunt (2002) observes that parental leave in Germany and France, at up to 36 months, is also more generous than here in Britain.

In addition, Hunt's article quotes a report from the Daycare Trust which finds that 'British childcare costs are the highest in Europe' (2002). This is all the more critical an issue for parents working in London, where childcare costs are probably the most expensive in the country. Some schools have explored the possibility of opening a crèche. The reality of this appears to be bureaucratically and financially complex, but is nevertheless worth exploring. This could go some way towards relieving teacher-parents of a significant pressure, both financially and psychologically.

The issue of bringing children to work is complex, and represents a microcosm of the teacher-parent conflict. For teachers, including myself, who have occasionally had no choice but to bring their children to work, the presence of students or colleagues in the same room as your own child, with each making simultaneous demands, is exhausting and confusing and rather at odds with the optimism associated with bringing two such important elements together. This is an issue highlighted by the literature (see Pflum, 2005, p.91).

It is an inescapable reality that at the main research site, and I suspect beyond, teacher attendance is demonstrably and negatively affected by the transition to parenthood. Illness (the prevalence of germs in early childhood is another reality which comes as a shock for many parents), medical appointments, childcare issues and events at their own children's schools are amongst the factors that have an impact on staff absence. This is another thorny issue that educational leaders need to negotiate, as they balance cost-effectiveness, performance and with the desire to be supportive and empathetic.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined a range of perspectives from scholars on combining teaching and parenthood, from Pflum's fundamentally pessimistic view to a more prevalent view that the challenges can be turned to our advantage as teachers, with parenthood affording us a more subtle, empathetic view of our students and their broader context. I have considered the considerable impact of school leaders and managers on teachers' effectiveness and wellbeing and some of the practicalities that are explored in the existing literature.

In the following chapter, I go on to analyse the methodology and research design for the study.

CHAPTER 5: Methodology and methods: research design

5.1 Introduction

This is a mixed methods study, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data. The study took place between October 2011 and June 2016. A full timeline of the research is included in Appendix 1.

The study takes a pragmatic approach within an interpretive paradigm to explore accounts of the shifting identities and experiences of secondary school teachers. The overarching aim of the study is to generate a theoretical framework for policy recommendations which will have a positive impact positively on the wellbeing and effectiveness of teacher-parents within and beyond the research sites. The key research question is:

What is the influence of parenthood on teacher identity, effectiveness, wellbeing and career aspirations?

This study also aims to answer two key subsidiary questions:

What are the factors, at micro, macro and meso level, that affect teacher-parent identity, wellbeing and career aspirations, both positively and negatively?

and

Which policies and practices at micro-, macro and meso level are effective when balancing parenting and teaching and how might these be developed further?

In this chapter, I begin by laying out my epistemological, ontological, rhetorical and axiological assumptions and explore the implications of these for the research and for my role as participative researcher. I then explain how these factors have led me to adopt a paradigm which incorporates elements of both pragmatism and interpretivism.

I demonstrate the way in which the pragmatic approach lends itself to 'the use of multiple tools of inquiry to gain different perspectives on problems at hand' (Biesta, 2003, p.108) and explore the strengths and limitations of the mixed methods approach. This is followed by a section examining and justifying my adoption of an interpretive methodology to look at the phenomenon of parents who teach in state schools in the UK. I follow this with a critical examination of the case study approach with which the research journey began at the central research site where I was working at the time.

In the following section, I explain how my research aims and methodology led me to adopt three research methods: focus groups, questionnaires and the analysis of online blogs - 'netnography' - in order to explore the influences of parenthood on teacher identity. I explain my sampling strategies and choice of research sites and make clear the limitations of the methods deployed, including action taken to mitigate these shortcomings.

I then go on to clarify my iterative approach to data analysis, before exploring issues of validity and generalizability and an exploration of the ethical considerations of the research project.

5.2 Methodology and Research Design

In this section, I aim to contextualise my identity as teacher-researcher by making explicit the philosophical assumptions that underpin the pragmatic, mixed methods approach to my research: the rhetorical, the axiological, the epistemological, and the ontological. I will outline the research journey which took me away from an initial decision to adopt a qualitative research approach, like the key authors who have influenced me in the field of research on teacher identity (Sikes, 1997; Bradbury, 2001; Cole, 2004; Miller, 2012) and led me to adopt a mixed methods approach. A key influence in this decision was Day's study, *Variations in Teachers', Lives and Effectiveness* (2006), a study commissioned by the DfES which offers both qualitative and quantitative data with the aim of informing educators, school leaders and the government.

I have, throughout this research project, returned repeatedly to the questions, 'so what?' and 'who am I doing this research for?' As made explicit by Biesta in his work on pragmatism and educational research, this research 'is not so much research about education as it is research for education... [Educators] want knowledge that can inform their actions and activities' (2003, p.1). In other words, the impetus for educational research is to have a direct influence on the day-to-

day lives of educators and, by extension, their students. The inescapability of the performativity agenda, which provides an external and potent judgment of the relative success or failure of schools and educators and affects almost every element of teachers' daily working lives cannot and, I believe, should not be avoided. This belief led me to the decision to incorporate a quantitative element to my research, through my implementation of questionnaires, in order to lend weight to the research in the eyes of educational leaders and policy makers.

Whilst qualitative data plays a key role in determining factors that act as enablers or barriers to effectively combining teaching and parenthood, I believe that the generation of a theory that can be both original and of academic sophistication and has the potential be meaningful to educators necessitates a pluralistic approach. Like Biesta, I believe that different methods, as well as 'different objects, different worlds, provide us with different opportunities and possibilities for action' (2003, p.108). My chosen methodology therefore draws strongly on elements of qualitative research approaches. As well as meaningful data, I aim to generate 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) and maintain a focus on human interaction, identity and emotion.

I am concerned with the complexities and contradictions inherent in balancing teaching and parenthood. Like Sikes, I believe that the challenge for the researcher is to pick up 'idiosyncrasies as well as commonalities' (1997, p.30) in order to reveal meaning behind the day-to-day actions of participants. I believe that meaning can be found as much, if not more, in the silences, hesitations, disagreements and contradictions of human communication as it is through outright assertions of truth or reason.

In the following section, I will demonstrate how my philosophical assumptions and identity as insider-researcher influenced my methodological approach.

5.2.1. Methodological Assumptions

The pragmatic approach to research offers the researcher freedom from existing assumptions and dichotomies, most notably the protracted and frequently fierce 'qual vs. quan' debate (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It offers 'a way of un-thinking certain false dichotomies, certain assumptions, certain traditional practices and ways of doing things, and in this it can offer new possibilities for thought' (Biesta, 2003, p.114). However, the concept of 'freedom' in academic research brings with it numerous dangers and challenges, not least the potential for

flabby ambiguity and unfounded speculation. In order for the project to have genuine integrity and validity, it is important to acknowledge the influence of a variety of paradigms, philosophies and authors on my identity as teacher, parent and insider-researcher. Below, I outline my four key philosophical assumptions: the rhetorical, the epistemological and the ontological. At each stage, I make explicit the dilemmas and tensions which have led me to take a mixed methods approach to the research.

At the heart of the research is the rhetorical 'I'. My rhetorical assumptions are strongly influenced by the qualitative paradigm, which necessitates an acknowledgement of my subjectivity and an illumination of my bias as insider-researcher. As a mother, teacher and holder of middle and senior leadership posts during the course of my research, I am both the vehicle for the research and a subject of it.

As an insider-researcher, whose experience is by definition similar to those of the research participants, I encountered the dilemma articulated by Smith: 'the crux of the dilemma I faced was in defining the extent to which my role was to represent the voices of the participants as opposed to interpret what I heard' (2012, p.9). Empathy for the respondents' situation is both a strength and a potential pitfall of research of this kind, and it is necessary to ensure that it does not cloud the research process. Furthermore, discussions around values and emotions bring with them for all research participants, myself included, an inevitable emotional response, be it passionate agreement, defensiveness, or opposition to what is being expressed. Rather than seeing these challenges as a limitation, I have aimed to embrace the complexity, the 'messiness' inherent in the interplay between myself and the participants in the research. In addition, participative research gives rise to myriad ethical challenges which are explored in more depth in the section on ethics below.

Having illustrated the influence of the qualitative paradigm in this study, it is essential to acknowledge the inescapable role that quantitative measures, in the form of the performativity agenda, play in the day-to-day lives of teachers. My identity as teacher and school-leader is defined by a series of data-driven measures around student performance and quality of teaching which define, in quantitative terms, my effectiveness in my role and influence my career progression.

I bring to the research a set of assumptions around my values – my axiology – as a teacher, educator, parent and researcher. These have roots in a commitment to a left-wing ideal of comprehensive education, opportunities for all and egalitarianism. My identity as a researcher owes a great deal to critical research and in particular feminist paradigms which see research as providing an impetus for social change. As a teacher and school leader, my beliefs are founded upon an ultimate desire to make a difference to the young people for whose education and development I am – directly and indirectly – responsible, as a parent, teacher, school leader, and member of a wider community of educators. This moral imperative has led me to associate myself with the pragmatic approach, which embraces intersubjectivity over relativism in the belief that:

...the only world we have, the only world that really matters, so we could say, is our common intersubjective world, the world in which we live and act together and for which we have a shared responsibility. It is for this reason that the scope of intelligence is not restricted to the domain of the means, techniques and instruments, but includes also the domain of the ends, purposes and values (Biesta, 2003, p.108).

I have made explicit my desire throughout this research project not to ‘change the world’, but at least to offer new perspectives and new ways of thinking about balancing teaching and parenthood which provide the potential for school improvement.

These values, like those that drive many of my colleagues, are fraught with tensions in the light of the government agenda with its continually shifting measures of success for schools, teachers and educators.

Thirdly, my epistemological assumptions are strongly influenced by qualitative research methods. Like Denzin and Lincoln (2011), I see truth and validity as perspectival, subjective, and open to multiple interpretations. My identity as researcher owes a great deal to the interpretive approach. Fundamental to interpretivism is the epistemological premise that ‘knowledge is constructed by mutual negotiation and is specific to the situation being investigated’ (O’Donoghue, 2007, p.10). My concern with how we come to understand the worldview of individuals is strongly aligned with the interpretive tradition. However, as a practising teacher, my researcher-identity is also driven by a practical imperative, a desire to seek ways forward and ideas for bettering the work-family balance of teacher-parents. This drive is founded in the pragmatic worldview.

Teachers function within a set of commonly understood quantifiable ‘truths’ imposed at national level which, in practice, define our worth to our institutions and our students – these include gradings applied to teachers’ lessons, the examination results of our students, and data which measures the progress, and thereby teachers’ impact on the groups of people for whom they are responsible. Whilst teachers may question these outwardly-imposed measures, to ignore them is to risk the credibility and long-term prospects of the schools we work in.

My ontological assumptions around ‘how things are’ and ‘how things really work’ (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p.224) combine elements of both the interpretive tradition and the pragmatic worldview. I see reality, far from being fixed and constant, as kaleidoscopic, constantly in flux and as the construct of social actors and the world and knowledge as being created by social and contextual understanding. I believe that people function within a rich contextual web, and notions of reality are constantly negotiated and renegotiated in the light of intersubjectivity and the interplay between the inner world of sense and emotion and outwardly imposed evaluations and judgments. However, I am equally influenced by the pragmatic worldview, which acknowledges ‘reality’ as the practical effect of ideas. Educators are, by nature, problem-solvers, and the world of logic and practical application of knowledge is at the heart of our day-to-day working lives.

The diagram below is a summary of my philosophical assumptions:

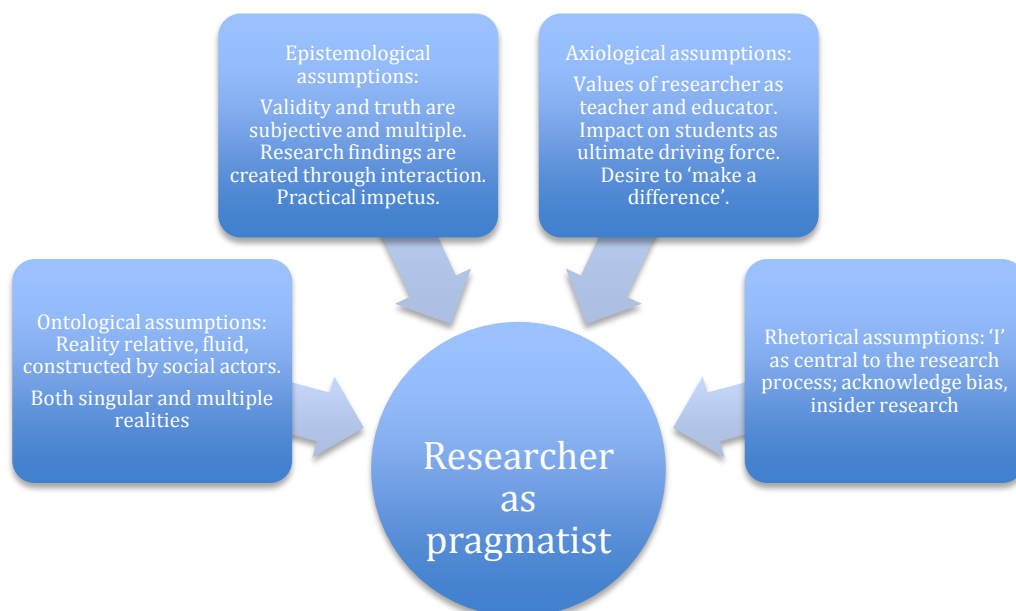


Figure 5: Epistemological Assumptions

5.2.2 The Research Journey: Pragmatism and Interpretivism

Like many of my fellow researchers, the early stages of doctoral research were marked by being overwhelmed by the plethora of literature around the qual/quant debate, with fierce exchanges between highly-respected academics who appeared, to the research novice, to be constantly at odds with one another. As illustrated by my philosophical assumptions, I was instinctively drawn in the first instance to a qualitative research approach, with its concern with thick description, human interaction, and a conscious desire to embrace the messiness and complexity of human experience. However, through contact with colleagues and policy makers and through a series of unexpected, serendipitous opportunities, my approach has evolved to incorporate elements of both interpretivism and pragmatism and has taken the form of a mixed methods study. Key turning points were policy makers' insistence on the importance of data in order that 'impact' can be demonstrated, an unexpected contact with a young statistician who was able to provide invaluable data around teachers who are parents in the UK, and the unanticipated, but extremely exciting, recruitment of more than 1,600 participants in my survey for UK teacher-parents.

This brief summary outlines the unpredictability of the research journey. Of the numerous possibilities on offer, the responsibility for choosing the most effective approach has been one of the most challenging parts of this journey. The importance of being guided by the aims of the research is paramount to effective research design, as emphasised by Patton (1992, p. 39) and Opie (2004, p.18).

To summarise, the aims of my research are as follows:

Firstly, to gather and analyse the narratives or 'stories' of the experiences of shifting identities of teacher-parents from comprehensive schools in England who are also parents, or have parental responsibility for children.

Secondly, to reflect upon the impact of existing policies at local and national level, and how these impact on the lives of teacher-parents.

Thirdly, to provide suggestions as to how the wellbeing and effectiveness of teacher-parents might be improved, by providing practical guidance and a framework for potential future policies.

Guided by these aims, I concluded that a pragmatic approach, incorporating elements of interpretivism, offered the best chance of success in achieving these aims. In this section, I will outline and justify my reasons for this decision, as well as exploring the limitations of pragmatism and my response to these.

The key features of the pragmatic worldview that make it appropriate to answer the question, 'what is the influence of parenthood on teacher identity, effectiveness and wellbeing?' are outlined below:

As a pragmatist, my work is practical and has a central interest in 'demystifying the research process [to make] it more accessible and potentially more accountable to the public' (Atweh et al, 1998, p.120). My ultimate audience is my teacher-parent colleagues and the beneficiaries of any research must be our students, as the primary aim of increasing teacher effectiveness is to improve the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms.

Pragmatic research is problem-centred, real-world practice oriented, and is concerned with the consequences of actions (Creswell, 2013, p.6). Rather than emphasising the research methods, the pragmatic researcher emphasises the research problem and uses all methods available to help understand it. Pragmatism emphasises the centrality and crucial importance of returning to, reviewing and revisiting the central research questions. Pragmatists 'consider the research question to be more important than either the methods they use or the worldview that is used to underlie the method' (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, p.21).

The pragmatist detaches him- or herself from the ongoing discussions over the relative value of qualitative versus quantitative research and is therefore free to deploy a pluralistic approach 'oriented towards "what works" and practice' (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2011, p.41). The pragmatic researcher 'rejects methodological orthodoxy in favour of methodological appropriateness as the primary criterion for establishing methodological quality' (Patton, 1992, p.39).

Pragmatism actively values the partnership between researchers and educators. It concerns itself with empirical research in a natural context and with bridging the gap between educational research and educational practice. In essence, as a practitioner-researcher, I embody this partnership, and am therefore aware of my responsibility to try to make a valid, meaningful – and practical – contribution to the world of education.

Pragmatism, broadly speaking, adopts a postpositivist, constructivist and participatory approach to research. Within this rather wide scope its appeal is that it gives me, the researcher, the option to acknowledge and incorporate elements of other paradigms which have influenced this project. The primary approach I have adopted alongside the pragmatic paradigm is that of interpretivism.

Pragmatism shares with interpretivism a belief ‘that that the world of human action is created through action and interaction, and that knowledge is intimately connected with what people do’ but takes this further by looking at the potential for ‘new knowledge [to open] up new and unforeseen possibilities, rather than telling us the one and only possible way to act’ (Biesta, 2003, p.2). I have taken both a deductive and an inductive approach to the research process, adopting an openness to new ways of seeing the world, new possibilities and new perspectives which could potentially be beneficial for fellow teacher-parents.

Interpretivism concerns itself to the ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions, and so lends itself to questions of how teacher-parents are positively and negatively affected, at micro, meso and macro levels by various factors. Interpretivism engages with how people define events in reality and how they act in relation to their beliefs. The key assumptions relevant to this examination of the experiences of teacher-parents are:

1. Everyday activity is the building block of society
2. Human activity is never totally imposed – human agents retain an element of autonomy.
3. Human beings do not act in isolation; we give meaning to our own and to others’ actions.
4. The negotiation of meaning is in constant flux.

(Adapted from O’Donoghue, 2007, p. 17).

No approach is without its limitations, and pragmatism is no exception. Whilst it may bring with it significant ‘freedoms’ including flexibility and the potential for wider accessibility, it is important to note that the adoption of the pragmatic approach does not absolve the researcher of a commitment to high standards of academic rigor. This, in response to the widespread

criticism of pragmatism as lacking in academic credibility (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009; Greene & Hall 2010). Brannen advocates maintaining some elements of the qual/quant dichotomy 'to guard against a creeping pragmatism and an absence of theoretical perspective' (1992, p.33). If anything, an awareness of these criticisms and the limitations of the approach necessitates making explicit my philosophical assumptions, the logic behind my research design, the research journey and the chosen research methods and taking every reasonable measure to ensure validity and reliability.

5.2.3. Mixed methods research

Creswell and Plano Clark have established that one of the main appeals of the pragmatic approach is that it leaves the researcher free to deploy a pluralistic approach to the research (2011, p.41), and its focus on the 'use of multiple methods of data collection to inform the problems under study' (ibid, p.41). Pragmatism is therefore widely associated with mixed methods research (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2011).

Mixed methods research (MMR) has been growing in popularity in academic circles in the last two decades and comes as a reaction to the fierce debate between the qualitative and quantitative research communities. Johnson et al. identified no fewer than nineteen different definitions of MMR, and summarised it as follows:

Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research and approaches (e.g. use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collections, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (Johnson et al., 2007, p.123).

As a pragmatic practitioner-researcher, I am particularly drawn to the way in which MMR 'encourages the use of multiple worldviews, or paradigms (i.e., beliefs and values), rather than the typical association of certain paradigms with quantitative research and others for qualitative research' (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2011, p.13).

It is important to note that MMR is not 'the easy choice', instead requiring a tight justification of chosen methods and an awareness of their limitations within a strong theoretical framework. Opting for a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis exposes the researcher to a whole new range of possibilities. This is both exciting and risky, bringing with it a responsibility to

make explicit and justify choices made at each stage of the research design. Below, I make explicit the strategies I have deployed and their influences.

My first significant influence is Mason (2006) whose paper outlines six possible strategies for implementing MMR. I heed her warning that the concept of 'triangulation' or of using mixed methods to piece together parts of a whole, cohesive picture, whilst tempting, is inherently flawed, reflecting a view of the world as universally explicable. Silverman (2012) challenged and questioned the notion of 'triangulation' as proof of validity and reliability, questioning its value with the warning that the researcher should beware of equating and comparing different forms of data which reflect different phenomena. So, whilst a debate on an online forum might reveal a set of 'truths' for one community, it does not follow that these could, for example, be applied to a group of teachers at the central research site.

Instead, the strategy I have deployed incorporates elements of both 'mixing methods to answer distinctive but intersecting questions' (Mason, 2006, p.9) and 'mixing methods opportunistically' (ibid., p.11). With the former, rather than striving to create a cohesive, integrated, corroborated view of the world, with different parts forming jigsaw pieces to give a neat picture, I embrace the inherent 'messiness' and multidimensionality of human interaction and identity, and reflect Mason's view that:

It is possible to envisage groups of questions about the social world which call for some kind of intersection, or interplay, of distinctive ways of seeing and, and which do not involve the squashing of these into one dominant methodological approach and one model of integration.

The strength of this strategy is that it creates a 'creative tension' between the different approaches and generates a dialogue within them, which in turn 'can help us to understand multi-dimensionality and social complexity' (Mason, 2006, p.8-9). Its major challenge is that it involves taking risks, pushing the boundaries of accepted social science research design, and the temptation to of 'fractur[e] into a parallel logic, or organis[e] itself too neatly into an integrated one' (Mason, 2006, p.10). However, its opportunities for harnessing contradiction and paradox lend themselves very effectively to a project with an explicit interest in the complexity of human experience. The paradox here is that a doctoral thesis must, by definition, be tight and coherent in its structure and findings, and the challenge is to present these contradictions and complexities in a way which is both coherent and true to the polyvocal nature of the research. This is a challenge to which I feel this project has risen, with Bronfenbrenner's theoretical model

providing a clear model with which to present the findings, which nevertheless does not attempt to conceal or deny the complexity of the experiences of the teacher-parent.

It is also important to acknowledge, at this stage, the significant role played by serendipity in my research journey. The topic of this thesis has drawn the interest of an unanticipated number of people from different fields, and attracted a volume of responses far beyond what I had anticipated. Whilst spontaneously running with each new opportunity puts the integrity of the research design in jeopardy, and the adoption of a purely opportunistic strategy lacks intrinsic logic and risks the researcher losing control of the research design, many of these new opportunities have been too valuable to waste. There have been some difficult choices to make at every level of the research, not least deciding that certain approaches and themes are simply beyond the scope of the project (for example a full focus on feminist perspectives, or an approach which allowed me to explore in depth the experiences of homosexual parents and single parents). The challenge for the researcher is to 'think twice before foregoing potentially interesting or important data, just as they should pause before grabbing an opportunity that may turn out to be not very fruitful' (Mason, 2006, p.11). Thus, I decided to grasp the opportunity to consider statistics from the UK's ONS around teachers who are also parents in the UK, in the light of the extensive statistical data provided by the unexpected response to my survey. I have, however, foregone the albeit exciting opportunity to take statistics from other European countries, or explore in depth subsets of the data related to the experiences of homosexual or single parents, each of which could potentially justify a doctoral thesis of its own.

Secondly, from Teddlie and Tashakkori's definitions of the key characteristics of MMR (2011, p.287), the following, paraphrased below, are noteworthy for the purposes of this research: MMR is experienced-based and focused on problem-solving, and it is therefore suited to pragmatic insider-research of this nature. It represents a celebration of diversity at all levels of the research process and, like qualitative research, requires an iterative, cyclical approach to research, including the use of both deductive and inductive logic; the development of theories and hypotheses that are then tested and re-tested through both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

My approach will be that of a 'sequential mixed design', defined by Teddlie and Tashakkori as a design:

in which mixing occurs across chronological phases (QUAL, QUAN) of the study; questions or procedures of one strand emerge from or are dependent on the previous strand; research questions are built upon one another and may evolve as the study unfolds (2009, p.344).

Thirdly, several of the major themes of qualitative research summarised by Patton (1980, pp.40-41) remain relevant to this MMR study: my personal contact with the participants and direct insight into their experience are essential to the inquiry, and there will be an assumption of 'dynamism' (Patton, 1980, p.40). This 'dynamism' assumes that change is constant and ongoing, and that adjustments to procedures and changes to behaviour will result from this research project (and in turn be reflected upon in data collection procedures). The researcher must aim for 'empathetic neutrality' and whilst 'complete objectivity is impossible', 'pure subjectivity undermines credibility' (ibid., p.41). In order to generate credible theory, the researcher must '[include] personal experience and empathetic insight as part of the relevant data, while taking a neutral non-judgmental stance toward whatever content may emerge' (ibid.). In practice, the challenge has been to strike a balance between sharing my own experiences as teacher-parent and ensuring that these do not colour or taint the essential purity of the research findings. Finally, the importance of design flexibility is stressed. The researcher should be open to adapting and modifying the inquiry as 'understanding deepens and/or situations change' and to '[pursuing] new paths of discovery as they emerge' (ibid.).

5.2.4 Case Study

The methodological approach adopted must always be guided by the research question, and is underpinned by the philosophical assumptions of the researcher. I initially adopted case study methodology in order to generate theory in response to the question, 'What is the influence of parenthood on teacher identity, effectiveness and wellbeing?' This case study was of fellow teacher-parents at the original site of study: a secondary comprehensive school in North London.

A case study 'is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single unit or bounded system' (Merriam, 1998, p.12) or 'an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a "real-life" context'. It is research-based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence led.' The primary purpose of the case study is:

to generate in-depth understanding of a specific topic (as in a thesis), programme, policy, institution or system to generate knowledge and/or inform policy development, professional practice and civil or community action (Simons, 2009, p.21).

This thesis concerns itself with generating theory as to the 'how' and 'why' of the contemporary phenomenon of combining teaching and parenthood, and requires an extensive and 'in-depth exploration of this phenomenon' (Yin, 2014, p.4). As a pragmatic, mixed methods researcher I initially adopted a case study methodology in order 'to build up a rich picture of an entity, using different kinds of data collection and gathering the views, perceptions, experiences and/or ideas of diverse individuals relating to the case' (Hamilton 2011, p.1). The case study research is appropriate to the central research question of the experiences of teachers who are also parents, in that it takes into account the subtlety and complexity of the diverse range of experiences and voices and aims to have an influence on school policy. An understanding of the unique and dynamic features of context or situation is central to case studies, which 'investigate and report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000, p.181).

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, p.317) identify the following characteristics as they apply to this case study:

- A concern with the rich and vivid description of events within the case.
- An internal debate between the description of events and the analysis of events.
- A focus upon particular individual actors or groups of actors and their perceptions.
- A focus on particular events within the case.
- The integral involvement of the researcher in the case.
- The deployment of 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973).

Thick description is particularly pertinent to this research area, which focuses on human interaction, perception and emotion and explores the interplay of professional and personal

identity. Throughout the research process, it is necessary to look beyond fact and surface appearance. Thick description:

... presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard (Denzin, 1989, p. 83).

By focusing beyond the surface and interpreting the silences, the hesitations, the omissions and the contradictions of the research participants, I aim to embrace the complexity of the experiences of teachers who are also parents.

Case study allows a number of possible approaches. The approach adopted here towards the generation of theory is that of interpretative case study, which:

... is used to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge existing assumptions which are held before the start of the data collection (Hitchcock & Hughes 1995, p.321).

I have adopted both an inductive and deductive approach, gathering data to generate theory. I have moved iteratively between the data and further understanding in my quest to develop a coherent set of theories (Simons, 2009, p.127). The research process is exploratory, necessitating constant testing and verification of emerging findings.

There are a number of limitations to the case study paradigm, which I highlight and to which I respond below.

One limitation is what Guba and Lincoln (1981) refer to as 'the unusual problem of ethics[...] An unethical case writer could so select from among available data that virtually anything he wished could be illustrated' (p. 378). Both the readers of case studies and the authors themselves need to be aware of biases that can affect the final product. However, it can be argued that it is the very intersubjectivity between the researcher, the research participants and, in turn, the reader of the research that meaning is generated. These issues are explored in detail in the section on ethics, below.

There is extensive debate around issues of generalisability and validity – how a single case can possibly generate data which is applicable to other situations. These issues which are worth

flagging up at this stage, before they are discussed in more depth in the relevant section below.

Hamel observes:

[The] case study has basically been faulted for its lack of representativeness... and its lack of rigor in the collection, construction, and analysis of the empirical materials that give rise to this study. This lack of rigor is linked to the problem of bias... introduced by the subjectivity of the researcher and others involved in the case (1993, p. 23).

However, he goes on to argue that these criticisms miss the point, citing the work of Shields (2007), who critiques the 'gold standard' of controlled trials in educational research and argues, in the context of qualitative case studies:

The strength of qualitative approaches is that they account for and include difference-- ideologically, epistemologically, methodologically--and most importantly, humanly. They do not attempt to eliminate what cannot be discounted. They do not attempt to simplify what cannot be simplified. Thus, it is precisely because case study includes paradoxes and acknowledges that there are no simple answers, that it can and should qualify as the gold standard (2007 p. 13).

In other words, instead of shying from the messiness and lack of coherence of human interaction and identity, the case study approach offers the researcher a way of embracing these elements.

As an answer to these limitations, I extended my methodology to include a wider sample of teachers through the use of 'netnography' and questionnaires.

5.3 Data Collection Methods

In order to address the question of how parenthood influences teacher-identity and to understand the various influences, at micro, meso and macro level on teacher-parent identity, and in order to be in a position to inform policy, I decided to pursue three primary methods of data collection: focus groups, questionnaires, and online forums.

The research process began with five separate focus groups between June and July of 2013. Three of these were based at the school where I was then working as a senior leader - a North London comprehensive. One was based at another local comprehensive school, and one at a school in Essex. Each focus group included between four and seven participants, all practising teachers, and a mixture of mainscale teachers, trainee teachers and senior leaders. A total of 33 teachers were involved in these focus groups, of whom 13 were male and 20 female.

The survey took place between November 2013 and January 2014. A transcript of the survey questions is included in Appendix 7. The survey received an unprecedented number of responses. Of the 1,604 respondents, 24% were male and 76% female. The respondents represented teachers from various roles in both primary and secondary settings, and included 94 headteachers, 255 senior leaders, and 380 mainscale teachers.

Between July 2013 and November 2015, I identified articles and blogs relevant to my area of study. In November 2015, I refined an original list of around 30 pieces to a selection of 13, which were selected in order to represent the range of voices in the area, and to represent, as far as possible, diversity in terms of gender, career stages and attitudes to teacher-parenting. Of these, three were written by men. Three of the pieces were written in direct response to my raising the issue of balancing teaching and parenthood (with reference to my research) on an online network.

My research journey took me from my initial decision to focus on teacher-parents from a single site to extend this over three sites. I then made the decision to broaden the data sample by collecting data from across the UK by means of online forums (employing a relatively new procedure which has come to be known as 'netnography' to generate mainly qualitative data) and questionnaires (to provide quantitative data). A precise sample size for the total number of teacher-parents practising in the UK is not available. However, recent data from the Department for Education indicates that there were 431,100 teachers FTE (full-time equivalent) working in the UK (DfE, 2015).

Each research method was used to inform, review and 'triangulate' with other data sources. My research suggests that this combination of data collection methods is unique to the field, and the aim has been that careful data analysis will yield unique insights.

My experience as a teacher-researcher, a manager, a union representative, and a member of the NCSL, as well as a number of other communities, both online and in person, put me in the privileged position of having access to a wide range of teacher-parents for research purposes.

I have taken a purposeful, criterion-based approach to sampling with a deliberate selection of participants in order to maximise understanding of the phenomena in question and to provide information-rich cases 'from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance

to the purpose of the research' (Patton, 1990, p.169). In a diverse school community, my aim was to represent the members who are parents, as honestly and accurately as possible by taking account of the different voices in terms of gender; sexual orientation; nationality; level of teaching and management experience; subject taught; social background and age. Much of this data is available for future research (though participants in this study were not explicitly asked to state their sexual orientation) and is included in Appendix 8. It should, however, be noted that the sample is invariably skewed, as all participants were volunteers.

I took a purposive approach with questionnaires, in the first instance exploiting my direct access to a potential 200 teacher-parents (with written permission from the headteacher of each school). I then targeted teacher-parents, school managers, and policy makers through the various agencies with whom I have contacts (including the NUT, the TSN, the TES etc.) This led to a snowball approach whereby the questionnaires were disseminated further (Tashakkori, p.76), driven mainly by contacts on the social networking site, Twitter. The initial view was to obtain and analyse at least 200 questionnaires in total, with a view to attaining a level of statistical significance, allowing me to identify patterns in the findings.

Online forums offered the potential to include extreme cases to gain as full a range of perspectives as possible. The idea of what O'Donoghue calls 'theoretical sampling' is to continue to vary the respondents until a point at which there are no genuinely new insights (2007, pp.60-61). This point is known as 'saturation'.

A summary of the sample sizes, sampling strategies and methods is shown below:

	Focus Groups	Questionnaires	Online blogs
<i>Sample size</i>	33	1,604	11
<i>Sampling method</i>	Purposive, Criterion-based	Purposive Snowball	Theoretical; by theme
<i>Who?</i>	Teacher-parents	Teacher-parents, teachers, policy makers	Teacher-parents

Table 1: Sample overview

In the next section, I will justify the choice of each method and examine its advantages and limitations.

5.3.1. Focus Groups

The dynamic nature of the focus group was the first data-gathering method to which I was drawn as a teacher-researcher, as outlined in the final section of the first assignment of this doctoral study. This format provides a forum in which potentially difficult issues can be explored in ways which challenge the assumptions of the researcher, and frequently also of the participants. Issues of power and dynamics, the tendency of certain voices to dominate, and the awareness of issues of power and status, and the tendency of participants to seek approval from the researcher by saying what they believe he or she wants to hear must be always kept in mind when analysing the findings. This is a forum in which barriers between relative strangers can be broken down, and natural hierarchies within the school management must be overcome.

I aimed for the focus groups of teacher-parents to represent, as far as possible, the diversity of the teaching staff in each school. These groups were essentially heterogeneous, representing (with the guidance and support of headteachers from each school) a range of interests, ages and backgrounds. I conducted an informal, pilot focus group to trial the questions, setting and organisation of the group. Each focus group lasted for between forty-five minutes and one hour. An outline of discussion topics and their rationale is included in Appendix 5.

Cohen and Manion define focus groups as follows:

Focus groups are contrived settings, bringing together a specifically chosen sector of the population to discuss a particular given theme or topic, where the interaction with the group leads to data and outcomes (2000, p.288).

The strength of focus groups can also be their weakness. By being 'contrived', they allow the researcher to control and manipulate the different combinations of respondents, with some very exciting possibilities as well as some real dilemmas around school hierarchies (questions around the presence of senior management at focus groups need to be answered very carefully). They also allow the researcher to collect concentrated amount of data in an efficient manner, whilst staying true to the prismatic and polyvocal spirit of qualitative research.

This same contrived element means that responses risk being less spontaneous than they would be in more natural settings, and that certain voices are likely to dominate. My role of the facilitator in drawing out narratives in this context therefore required a very specific set of skills around maintaining order and authority and establishing trust, which are similar - though by no means identical – to those used in the classroom. The intensity of a focus group means that, as facilitator, I had the additional responsibility of ensuring that the experience was a positive one, and for ensuring that any potential of unexpected conflict or upset was resolved within the session.

Focus groups are ideal for drawing out contradictions, paradoxes, the unsaid and the implied as well as what is made explicit. This in turn makes them very complex to analyse. In order to focus the research, Barbour and Schostak (in Somekh & Lewin) suggest that the researcher asks the following questions:

Who talks to who [sic], when, where and why?
Who avoids talking to who [sic], when, where and why?
Who talks about who [sic], when, where and why?
What do they talk about, when, where and why?
What do they keep quiet about, when, where and why?
And, in each case, under what circumstances and to who [sic]?
(2005, p.44).

Focus groups are therefore full of potential for analysing social interactions and making explicit commonly held values – and shared language – amongst teacher-parents. In addition, they are liable to bring out the ‘shadow side’ of an organization (Fox, Martin, & Green, 2007, pp.59-75) by bringing to the fore the less explicit power structures, allegiances and dissatisfactions present in a professional community. An awareness of this ‘shadow side’ had to be present at each stage of the planning and execution of the focus group. It was important to consider when and how to include members of senior management or colleagues linked through line management responsibilities and if or when to include those who share a history of conflict or indeed those in close personal relationships. In my new senior management role, I needed to carefully consider, through consultation with colleagues and through a pilot focus group, whether I was in the best position to chair the group, or whether I should second this responsibility to a colleague or outsider to the school community.

As well as the importance of carefully planning and trialing questions, layout, composition of groups, it was important to consider the methods used for record keeping and transcription. There are currently numerous forms of technology available to record, transcribe and interpret data, but it was important not to let the draw of the technology detract from the essence of the findings.

I made the decision to use digital recording equipment for focus groups, and to take written notes of body language which seemed significant. At this stage, for the recordings of the focus groups only, I included a co-researcher and school colleague. She was not directly related to the research, nor was she a subject of it, and she was briefed on ethical guidelines in advance. Her role was to co-ordinate and trouble-shoot the technical elements of the recordings and to keep note of pertinent physical responses, such as leaning forward or back, eye contact (or lack thereof) and variations in volume and pace of speech, enabling me to focus fully on direct communication with focus group participants. There were two major advantages to this approach: the first is that it provided another perspective to challenge creeping researcher bias, and the second is that it allowed me as interviewer/facilitator to give my full attention to the dynamics of the group.

5.3.2. Questionnaires

Questionnaires are useful for triangulating research findings when used in conjunction with other methods (Flick, 2009, p.27). I made the decision to use the questionnaire to collect qualitative data to complement, challenge and reflect upon the qualitative data collected using other methods. Questions were based upon ranking and rating influences of teacher-parent identity, effectiveness and performance and the precise questions were composed based upon themes raised in the initial focus group and through the first responses to online forums.

The questionnaire has clear advantages: it is economical, the questions can be designed for specific purposes, and it can easily be anonymised (Opie, 2004, p.95). Used as a quantitative data gathering method, it can be easily used to collect quantifiable survey information, can be administered without the researcher present, and provides data that is relatively straightforward to analyse (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 245).

However, it is important to note that questionnaires are more conducive to fact-finding than to determining causal relationships (Opie, 2004, p.95). As with the presentation of focus groups, the questions must be very carefully pitched so as to be as unambiguous and as accessible as possible (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p.248). A pilot questionnaire was administered to a small group in advance in order to maximise the quality and effectiveness of the process. One limitation of the process is that the facility to insist every respondent answered every question was not exploited to its full capacity, so, although there were a total of 1,604 respondents, not every respondent answered every question. Were I to be repeating the project, there is a facility which identifies compulsory questions which I would exploit. The majority did answer all key questions, however, lending the data enough weight to give it credibility.

Regardless of the intention, the questionnaire is likely to be seen as an encroachment on the respondent's time, and for the teaching professional, anything perceived as an extra administrative task has the potential to be perceived negatively or ignored. It was vital that the questionnaire was as clear and concise as possible and that its purpose, background and aims were explained very clearly to participants by means of a letter of introduction which was emailed out to all participants.

5.3.3 Netnography

Online ethnography, or 'netnography' is a term coined by Kozinets (2010) to designate the study of online communities and cultures created through computer-mediated social interaction. Kozinets (ibid.) makes the somewhat controversial, but increasingly accepted suggestion that the online interactions provide a valid context for ethnographic fieldwork.

I was inspired to adopt this research method by a background in membership of online communities, both as a parent and a teacher, and by Silverman's promotion of naturalistic methods over more contrived data collection methods like interviews (Silverman, 2012). The major advantage of using data generated through online discussion forums is that it passes the 'dead sociologist test' (referred to by Silverman, 2012) in that it would still exist if the sociologist were run over by a bus. However, other researchers suggest an immersion or participation in the online community by the researcher in order to create 'thick description' (Markham, 1998; Hine, 2000), which aims to reveal layers of meaning and social significance behind social interactions.

I made use of online blogs and networks such as Twitter to pose relevant questions and provoke discussions between teacher-parents and other interested parties. A full list of blogs referenced is included in Appendix 9. In line with the ethical considerations outlined below, I chose, as researcher, to be present in the process and to declare, in brief, my research intentions when initiating and contributing to discussions.

The major advantages to this method are that it is relatively innovative, unobtrusive and is efficient, cost-effective way of generating relevant, detailed and naturally occurring data quickly (often in real time). Because the data is effectively in the public domain, the researcher has ease of access, though this does raise certain ethical issues which are outlined below.

In addition to certain ethical complexities, there are some challenges and disadvantages to this method. Online blogs and articles frequently inspire subsequent discussions. Brem (2002) indicates that, just as we observe body language and facial expression, for each new forum accessed, it is important to take the time to familiarise oneself with conventions of expression (acronyms, symbols etc.). This is a method which requires high levels of skill from the researcher when interpreting the data, mainly because of the question of 'authenticity' of voice. The presence of 'trolls' (personae created by users in order to deliberately sabotage online discussions and take on deliberately false extreme positions) can quickly derail a discussion. Initial trial research online indicates that the data generated is of varying quality. When I initiated an online forum to ask about others' experiences of using such forums to generate research data, there were several responses which endorsed the advantages explored above, but also several cautions as to the quality and authenticity of the data generation. 'The internet is a giant dustbin,' warned one user.

However this method, when used in conjunction with more information-rich methods such as focus groups and questionnaires, has the potential to give voice to a greater variety of perspectives and to elicit original findings in teacher-parent research.

5.4 Data analysis

The major challenge, when using three such diverse modes of data-collection, is to adopt modes of data analysis for each one that ultimately inform and complement one another and allow me, as researcher, to suggest theories and suggestions for policy development which are an honest and informed reflection of the data collected.

The major impact of moving from a purely qualitative approach to a mixed methods research design is that data analysis is now both deductive and inductive, and that numerical data can be used to inform the coding and categorising which will be applied to the analysis of the qualitative data.

When planning the process of data analysis, I was guided most recently by the advice of Silverman (2012) that the process should be continuous, and should be repeatedly reviewed and revisited. Silverman advises a 'right to left' or a 'bottom up' approach should be taken when analysing text or conversation and which forces us to constantly question our assumptions, to take into account varying influences (including that of the researcher) on the research participant, and to ask exactly how, and by what means, conclusions are reached.

For the analysis of the qualitative data collected - focus groups, blogs and open-ended questionnaire responses, I used the software programme NVivo with the guidance of Bazeley and Jackson (2014). I deployed the process of 'data reduction', a continuous process 'of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in the written-up field notes or transcriptions' (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.10). An example of the initial phase of the focus group data analysis is provided in Appendix 6.

I then used NVivo to enable me to create 'nodes' or collections of references to specific themes. The approach was broadly aligned to that termed by O'Donoghue, the 'editing analysis approach', whereby the researcher reads and sorts the data into meaningful segments which are categorised and coded through a process of constant questioning:

The researcher asks questions about discrete events, incidents, or thoughts that are indicated in an observation or statement, such as the following:

What is this?
What is going on?
What does it stand for?

What else is like this?

What is this distinct from? (O'Donoghue, 2007, p.60).

I applied the same set of principles to the content analysis of online forums. Robson advocates the construction of categories for analysis, which are then coded and texted upon samples of text. He argues that it is frequently important to deploy grounded theory techniques alongside these more objective techniques in order to challenge the subjectivity of the researcher and for the sake of a rigorous and more detailed analysis (Robson, 2011, p.354). He also warns that the researcher must learn to distinguish 'between witting and unwitting evidence' - between what he or she intended to convey and what they communicate inadvertently (ibid., p.35).

Because of the unanticipated large volume of data, the data analysis ultimately focused upon key themes, including gender roles, the concept of 'choice', guilt and institutional values. These are outlined in detail at the beginning of Chapter 6. Specific analyses by group, such as age of teacher-parent, number of children, age of children, length of teaching experience or marital status fell outside the scope of this study. This data is available for future research projects and, to this end, I have included in Appendix 8 a breakdown to indicate the breakdown of each key group, from which the data can be extrapolated and used for new research.

5.5 Reliability, Validity and Generalisability

This is a piece of insider-research which owes much of its influence to post-structuralist perspectives and actively and explicitly brings to the fore the complexities and paradoxes inherent in an analysis of identity, perceptions and relationships. Any attempt to provide neat oversimplifications or clear resolutions to the questions and dilemmas faced by teacher-parents on a daily basis would be counterintuitive. I do not seek to provide 'toolkit' of solutions for school leaders or teachers to optimise work-family balance and guarantee effective educators and responsible, fulfilled and happy parents. Like Mason (2006), I have consciously distanced myself from the qual/quant debate and made use of a 'palette' (p.14) of methods and approaches and taken a flexible approach in order to celebrate the richness, depth and complexity of the experiences of teacher-parents. This approach has been combined with a pragmatic approach which, like Mason, seeks 'effective ways of proceeding' (2006, p.22).

However, it would be naïve to presume that in espousing this approach, the research is exempt from the relatively positivist issues of reliability, validity and generalisability. Thus, in this section, I made explicit the measures I have taken to ensure that the process and outcomes are viewed as reliable and credible by teacher-colleagues, academic mentors, and those in both fields on whom I aim to have a wider impact.

Reliability, validity and generalisability are explored in considerable depth (and subject to wide-ranging debate) in the academic community (for example Kirk & Miller, 1986; Silverman, 1993, and 1997; Stake, 1995). In this section, I will firstly establish my credibility as a researcher, going on to address broader issues of reliability and validity and ending with a discussion around the generalisability of the theories generated by this research.

For the purposes of this research, in answer to the question, ‘who am I to create knowledge?’ I drew firstly upon my professional reputation, integrity, experience as a mother and teacher, and my academic record. Secondly, in order to ensure confirmability, I took responsibility for creating a clear audit trail, traceable by interested parties, for the whole of my research process (O’Donoghue, 2007, p.100). This helped to ensure dependability of findings, and involved ensuring that recordings and manuscripts were clearly indexed and stored securely. Thirdly, I was accountable for member checking - the act of sharing transcripts and research findings with research participants and giving them the opportunity to add detail or correct perceived misconceptions and myself as researcher the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. Fourthly, I ensured that I created regular opportunities for consultation with peers and fellow academics. Finally, I kept a research diary in order to keep a running record of reflections and observations, and to maintain critical reflexivity.

The vast majority of literature on qualitative research promotes ‘triangulation’, ‘the use of two or more forms of data collection and/or the use of two or more perspectives’ to provide a ‘fuller and more robust picture, enhancing claims to quality’ (Hamilton, 2011, p.2) and to help to ensure reliability and credibility of outcomes. (See also Patton, 1992, pp.187-189; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, pp.80-82; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, pp.112-116). Triangulation is the employment of a variety of different methods which reflect the prismatic nature of the research process by offering converging and conflicting approaches and viewpoints. By choosing to include quantitative questionnaires, I have added an extra element through which to ‘triangulate’ the

findings. However, as explored above, the notion of 'triangulation' must be handled with caution.

For Bazeley, the issue of reliability and validity are ultimately about careful choice and justification of methods and theoretical rigor:

[V]alidity stems more from the appropriateness, thoroughness and effectiveness with which these methods are applied and the care given to thoughtful weighing of the evidence rather than from the application of a particular set of rules or adherence to an established tradition (2002, p.9).

Careful consideration should also be given to the treatment of error or deviance in research findings. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998, p.80) suggests that, when assessing the validity and reliability of research, the researcher should ask two questions:

1. Am I truly measuring / recording what I intend to measure/record rather than something else? [...]
2. Assuming that I am measuring/recording what is intended, is my measurement/recording without error? (1998, p.80).

They go on to warn of the importance of taking into account the effect of the researcher's presence, behaviour and questioning on the research participants (ibid., p.97), a consideration echoed in Silverman's recent seminar (2012).

There is a plethora of literature which deals with the issue of 'generalisability' – the potential for research findings and theories generated to be applied to other situations (for example Erickson and Roth, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1992; Peshkin, 1993; Silverman, 1993; Stake, 1995). Whilst the issue is to some extent addressed through the introduction of a quantitative element, the sample is nevertheless relatively small and the majority of the research methods remain qualitative, so there is an ongoing need to address the thorny issue of 'generalisability'.

Lincoln and Guba place the emphasis instead upon the concept of 'transferability', arguing that the deployment of 'thick description' enables the reader to make a decision about whether transfer to alternative settings can be contemplated as a possibility (1985, p.359). Whilst acknowledging that, with naturalistic research methods, nomic generalisations that are truly universal are not possible, they do argue in favour of the generation of what Cronbach called 'working hypotheses' (cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.123). I am particularly drawn by the concept of a 'holographic generalization' [sic] (ibid., p.125), as it reflects the prismatic nature of

reality embraced by Denzin and Lincoln (2011). Eisenhart argues that generalisation from qualitative research methods is both possible and important and promotes 'probabilistic' generalisation, 'based on statistical probability or near approximations' (Erickson & Roth, 2009, p.55).

5.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations permeate this research project at every level. It was essential to adhere to the ethical guidelines both of the university and of the school, as well as the guidelines outlined by BERA (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). The key ethical considerations for this piece of research are: informed consent, the protection of the identity of individuals, my affiliation to more than one institution, and the reconciliation of my various roles in the private and professional arenas.

When eliciting the co-operation of colleagues in the process, both within and beyond the main research site, it was essential to communicate in writing from the outset, the exact nature of and intentions behind the research. Doyle (in Campbell & Groundwater-Smith) provides a useful summary of the information that must be included:

- what the research is for;
 - who will conduct the research and how;
 - how data will be collected and what will happen to the data including where it will be stored and who will see it;
 - whether there are any risks, physical or psychological;
 - how confidentiality will be dealt with; when the research is finished whether it will be published and who will read it; and finally;
 - the benefits participants will enjoy.
- (2007, p.77).

In addition, participants were required to fill in a consent form (included in Appendix 4), and were made aware that they had a right to withdraw at any stage in the process, and to have any materials that they had produced (interview recordings, transcripts, field notes) destroyed. Participants were given copies of transcripts to read, as well as copies of research findings, and given the right to comment upon and request changes be made to any elements which they deemed to be an inaccurate or unfair representation of their story.

As a teacher and as a researcher, I have a moral and professional duty to report any findings that lead me to suspect that any participant is a direct danger to themselves or others, and this had to be made explicit at the outset.

In terms of protecting identity, participants were given pseudonyms and every attempt was made to avoid including details which point to their identity. However, they were also made aware that, due to the small scale of the research, there was a risk that identification may be possible. Where participants offer particularly controversial perspectives (for example criticism of school policy), as researcher, I needed to make the difficult decision as to how – or whether – to include these in the research findings.

To ensure security, all materials were stored on my password-protected office computer and on a USB, with hard copies of data stored in a locked filing cabinet.

A particular challenge to my role as researcher is the fact that the research was partially funded by the school where I was then employed, and the expectation was that it would ultimately have a positive and measurable impact on the progress of our students. I needed to balance this with the nature of mixed methods research, which does not lend itself to straightforward recommendations, nor to value-judgements on the quality or otherwise of school policies.

Secondly, the various 'hats' I wore, within school and outside, had the potential to give rise to a number of ethical dilemmas. As well as being a classroom teacher, I managed a large department, was a union representative, and regularly took a role in whole-school initiatives. The potential for ethical complexities was crystallised at an early stage when a pregnant member of the department and potential research participant approached with a grievance around her timetable and working conditions, which had been subject to considerable adjustment after she told the school she was pregnant. Each of my roles gave rise to a different response: as then Head of Faculty, to support the decision already made by her head of department, as union representative, to take act upon the claim of discrimination, as mother and friend, to offer sympathy, and as researcher, to sit and listen to her story at length. The lesson here was to be absolutely clear with her in advance about which role I was fulfilling in my communication with her (in this case, Head of Faculty), and for her to be clear with me which role she wished me to play.

This issue, combined with my then recent promotion to the senior leadership team, highlighted issues around politics and power that chime with what is termed as the 'shadow side' of an organisation by Fox et al (2007, pp.59-75). As researcher, whilst being open about my desire to emphasise the positive influences of parenthood on teacher wellbeing and performance, I was cautioned against naivety and needed to maintain an awareness of the existence of social systems, organisational politics and areas of discontent or conflict within each organisation (ibid., p.61).

This issue of 'hats' is not just restricted to me as researcher; potential research participants came from all strata of the school's hierarchy, and I encountered complex questions around the wisdom of involving, for example, a deputy head in charge of timetabling in a focus group which explores the issue of flexible working hours; a husband and wife in the same group, and of discussing issues such as sexuality and single-parenthood in a focus group made up of colleagues who may hitherto have not shared such information. At each stage, it was essential that I was guided by the researcher's ultimate duty of care to research participants.

The introduction of online blogs, articles and forums as part of the research process, brought with it a new set of complex ethical issues. Questions of who 'owns' the data and around the use of online pseudonyms (Brownlow & O'Dell, 2002, p.9) had to be addressed, together with the issue of the perceptions of users around 'private' online space. It was also worth being aware of the tendency for users to express opinions more personal and sensitive than they would in a face-to-face conversation. If the information is public and exists regardless of the researcher, in theory, it can be used at will, but where does this leave the rigorous ethical guidelines around 'informed consent' used in other data collection methods? This is a relatively new area of research in the academic community and for me as a researcher. A good starting point in this was the code of conduct or user guidelines for each internet forum. These are broadly identical from forum to forum, and an example of the one from 'Wordpress' is included in Appendix 10, as is the Twitter Code of Conduct, as Twitter was used to disseminate the survey and identify suitable blogs.

These ethical issues are as fascinating as they are challenging and complex, and negotiating my different identities, my various allegiances, and ensuring, ultimately, that the research has a direct benefit for all concerned is part of what makes the research journey so interesting.

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained and justified my research paradigm, and demonstrated how my chosen methods are the most appropriate for my research question, and the best suited to yielding outcomes that are rigorous, deep, thorough and of value to others in the field of academia and education. I have argued that I, as professional teacher and informed researcher, am in a unique position to offer fresh perspectives, and generate new theory on the impact of parenthood on teacher identity that is valid, reliable and has the potential for transfer to other contexts. I have outlined the ethical issues central to my role as researcher, mother and teacher, and taken full and explicit responsibility for my duty of care to research participants and obligation to produce work that is of benefit to others.

I have demonstrated that the research process is subject to constant review and reappraisal, and that it cannot be divided into straightforward, discrete 'phases', but requires constant revisiting of the material, and a willingness to criticise, review and change approach where necessary, and a constant openness to the unexpected. My decision to move from a qualitative approach to a mixed methods approach reflects the dynamic nature of this process.

Rather than allow these uncertainties to threaten or undermine the research project, I will aim to immerse myself in the paradoxes and contradictions experienced by teacher-parents and through the research process - to explore, analyse and question these with a view to seeking new perspectives and to turning challenges into opportunities for fresh thinking.

CHAPTER 6: Data analysis

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse the responses of teachers to the central question: What is the influence of parenthood on teacher identity, effectiveness and wellbeing? I explore to what extent, and in which forms, being a parent influences teachers' perceived effectiveness, relationships and career trajectories. Research data – predominantly qualitative, with some quantitative elements - is elicited by means of focus groups, 'netnography' - online blogs and articles - and a questionnaire. I adopt the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory in order to examine the interplay of micro-, meso- and macro- influences on teacher identity, as well as to identify and analyse key themes highlighted by the research participants.

This chapter looks in turn at the impact, as described by participants, on teacher identity, effectiveness and wellbeing, before exploring how teachers balance the two roles. The following section examines which factors contribute to role enrichment and role conflict for teacher-parents, and includes reference to the paradoxes, contradictions and uncertainties experienced by many teacher-parents. Weaved through this chapter are some of the more striking themes thrown up by the research process:

- Gender roles and the perceived influence of gender on career progression
- Choice (or the illusion thereof), frequently linked to financial assets
- Relationships – between the research participants, and their own relationships at home and at work
- Time management and perceptions of the passing of time
- Critical incidents and epiphanies
- The practicalities and minutiae which influence teachers' daily lives.

6.1.1 Micro, meso and macro influences on teacher identity, effectiveness and wellbeing

It is worth briefly revisiting Figure 1, the adapted model of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, in order to highlight the influences, at micro, meso- and macro-level on teacher-parents:

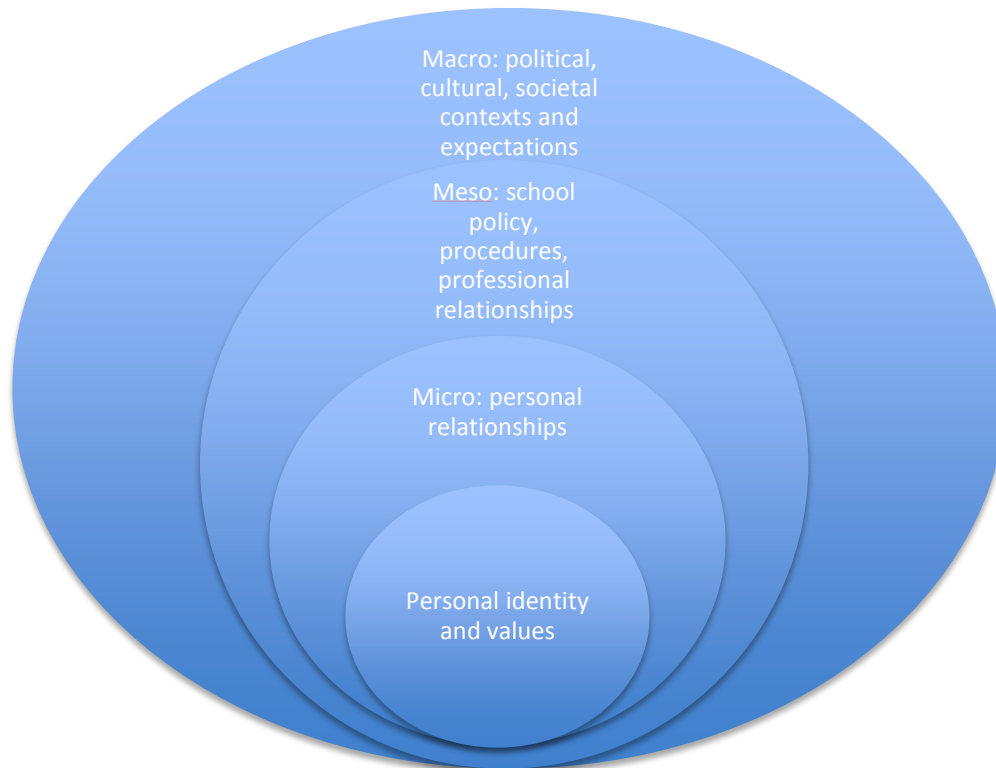


Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

Due to the breadth and depth of my chosen topic and the necessary scope of this particular study, I have chosen to hone in on specific key themes in detail, and have allowed these choices to be led by the discussion points shared by the research participants. In terms of the 'ecological' layers which have an impact on teacher identity, aspirations and wellbeing, the data analysis process revealed the following themes as the most prevalent:

At micro level:

- Family support networks, or lack thereof.
- Day-to-day interactions with colleagues and students.
- Day-to-day responsibilities at home and at work and their impact on perceptions of time.

At macro level:

- School policies
- The ethos and culture of school life.

At meso level:

Notably, at this level, reference to specific national or government policies around teaching were negligible. This is possibly due to the increasing diversification of our system and schools' increasing autonomy in how they manage themselves. References to national and government influences were, broadly speaking, based on perception and speculation, and focused on:

- Perceptions – seen by many as inaccurate - of teachers' workload and responsibilities
- Public perceptions of the value and success – or lack thereof – of teachers
- The performativity agenda
- Policies around parental leave

6.1.2 Considerations regarding data collection

As highlighted in the methodology chapter, this sample of research participants is inevitably skewed: all participants willingly volunteered to be part of the study and each data collection method, as described previously, has its own unique strengths and limitations. Colleagues in focus groups were generally keen to portray their schools in a positive light, and this was frequently also the case in relation to their own performance, choices and motivations. Where there were disagreements, these were invariably courteous and measured, and there was a clear dominance of certain voices, which meant some colleagues were significantly more silent. Blogs and articles are inevitably public pieces, and their authors generally wrote quite assertively, keen to communicate a key point or idea which they perceived to challenge or reinforce existing thinking. Arguably, the questionnaires, which were ostensibly anonymous (despite an option to include an email address), have the potential to offer the most 'honest' responses – the responses least likely to betray a desire to conform, to be influenced by what Marcia terms 'conditions of worth' (1989, p.406), as explored in Chapter 3. However, the most open-ended questions came at the end of a fairly lengthy series of short answer or multiple choice questions, and possibly did not elicit the level of detail or reflection which might have revealed more profound or complex findings, especially for busy teachers who had a fixed time to complete the questions.

The following section of this chapter will go on to examine, according to research participants, the key question underpinning this study: how – and to what extent – parenthood has an impact, firstly on teacher identity, then on teacher effectiveness and thirdly on teacher wellbeing.

6.2.1 The impact of parenthood on teacher identity

Participants were asked to consider how parenthood had impacted on their sense of identity as a teacher. For most participants, there were clear overlaps between the two. Participants frequently highlighted consistency and boundaries as common factors. One teacher-parent told the group about the realisation that she was employing the school behaviour procedures with her three-year-old son as she placed him on the 'naughty cushion'.

For others, the roles of parent and teacher are similar, but enacted in a different way, with clear professional boundaries in the classroom and the clear necessity to avoid physical intimacy and excessive emotional involvement. The patience, empathy and clarity of communication required is the same for both roles, and the skills complement one another:

I think both the roles lend to each other really well... when you say no, you've got to mean no, and I think it's the same within the classroom... And when I go home, I'm still with children, so it's – your day doesn't end. There's no split, there's no divide. It's just the same role. You're moving into it in a slightly different way (Rama, focus group participant).

For two other participants, the roles of parent and teacher are virtually indistinguishable from one another. In his blog, MrSeniorLeader notes that the goals of the two roles are, for him, essentially the same: 'As a father, I want to create a climate where my children can learn, grow and change, confident in who they are, unafraid to take risks. And in my classroom... well, I want exactly the same thing!' (2015). In a similar vein, Eleanor, a focus group participant and mother to four children, finds that the two roles sum up her identity, and there is a clear note of pride in her assertion of this:

They are my identity. I am a teacher and a mother, and that's pretty much all I am. I don't have hobbies. I don't do anything outside of those two things. So I'm either teaching or I'm being a mother, so they're actually a combination of my life. But when I'm in school, I do treat them hopefully like I'm kind of a motherly figure? I look after them, I hope. That's my aim anyway, is that they talk to me like I am - like I have my family next to me. And I talk to them like their mothers, or whoever they live with, next to them. And hopefully I do - hopefully, most of the time - provide a caring motherly role in school as well, if not being a bit bonkers with it.

To be in *loco parentis* during school hours is a key element of contemporary teaching in the UK, and our duty of care for the welfare and safeguarding of young people reflects this responsibility. The pastoral role can become so involved that students demonstrate brief confusion as to who is standing in front of them, as pointed out by Rod, a Head of Year: 'I've had a couple of occasions over the years where a kid has inadvertently called you 'Dad'... it makes me wonder about how they perceive me sometimes.' Another participant responded, 'Do you think that's to do with, maybe at home they haven't had a Dad, and you end up being father figure to them?' Given that incidents like this are quite common for teachers (as reflected in laughter and murmurs of agreement after this anecdote), it can hardly be a surprise that teachers can struggle to create clear distinctions between their identity as parent at home and teacher at school.

For others still, a compulsion to keep the roles separate is key, though the rationale varied from participant to participant. For two female focus group participants in the same session, this is linked to a clear desire to compartmentalise the two roles, possibly because of a concern about losing professional credibility.

Frances, a senior leader, clearly states her view that 'you don't – I don't think you do parent in the same way that you teach, or teach in the same way that you parent'. For Frances, there was a conscious decision early in her career to keep the fact that she was a mother quiet at work:

I think when - certainly when I started teaching, if I'm really honest, I was very conscious of not bringing my family identity to work. And I'm not sure why that is, whether I wanted specifically for myself to have that... cut off. But I remember distinctly somebody saying to me after my first year of teaching, erm, oh, I didn't realise you had children, er, so – that – that was interesting for me to see as a person. I don't know if that was because of being a woman, I didn't want to be defined by having children, or whether it was that I wanted to prove that I could do this with a family and it wouldn't impact on my work, but definitely – um – I remember that distinctly, and thinking, um, wondering to myself, I wonder why that is, or whatever.

For another, as a senior leader seeking promotion, she felt the need to hide the fact that she was pregnant until it was no longer possible to do so:

I didn't tell anybody until I really couldn't not tell anybody, because of how I felt it was going to change everybody's perception of me and my career, and whether I would get the pay arrangement that was going to be the same for the two equivalent vice principals – who obviously were men and weren't pregnant. So I just kept it completely separate – never mentioned it.

These perspectives reflect the findings of Hall, who quotes a respondent who 'felt she had to show that being a woman with children did not affect how she did the job' and coped by 'minimizing the visibility of family at work and compartmentalizing the different areas of her life' (1996, p.52)

There were two distinct groups amongst the research participants: those who were parents before becoming teachers, and those who became parents after becoming teachers. Strikingly, participants overwhelmingly tended to identify the most recent transition as the most significant one. For one male participant, new to the profession and with teenage children, the notion of parenting as effective preparation for teaching is inaccurate:

I thought that being a Dad was hard enough, but it's nothing compared to being a teacher... I had this naïve idea that I'd walk in and have a sense of... not immediate, kind of, authority, or whatever, but, I just... I just think I didn't realise how hard it would be to sort of work together to earn their... you know, their trust and their kind... not respect necessarily, but... do you know what I mean? Just to get a decent working – um – environment, and, um, I'm struggling with it, to be perfectly honest, you know... I'm not really sure how – how, if teaching's informed my parenting or – but I don't think parenting's informed my teaching in terms of that – but, as I say, I think I'm on a very steep learning [curve]...

However, the majority of participants were teachers before becoming parents, and the transition to parenting is widely regarded as an opportunity – or indeed as presenting a necessity – to completely re-evaluate priorities. Overwhelmingly, the participants, like Cole in Chapter 4, acknowledged a transformation in their sense of both personal and professional identity and; 'the world became a different place and "I" a different person within it (Cole 2004, p.78).

It's no longer 'just about you as an individual', said one participant. Findlater, in her blog, 'Becoming A Mama', offers the subtitle, 'Before You, My Whole Life Was Acapella'. This choral metaphor encompasses the transition to a sense of an identity that is more intrinsically linked to others and to a greater sense of moral and educational purpose.

The sense of being part of a wider network, not just of your own nuclear family, but of a community of people with growing children of their own, is echoed by the father of a young baby: 'It's like you've joined that adult club... - your thinking changes – your thinking changes. You know. I could have been out every Friday night... But I want to – I want to – get involved in my child's life...'

A senior leader with a young daughter stated: ‘I think teaching was more my life when I didn’t have a kid’. Shifting priorities are a key theme that comes across in the research. This changed sense of what’s important is reflected by the vast majority of the participants in all forms of data collection. For many participants, their identity as a teacher was very much the primary element of what they stood for prior to parenthood. Being a parent forces them to re-evaluate this.

6.2.2 The impact of parenthood on perceived wellbeing and effectiveness

Wellbeing and effectiveness are intrinsically linked for teachers, according to key researchers in the field such as Nias (1996) and Day (2007). A sense of getting up in the morning to undertake a role that is important and worthwhile is central to wellbeing, and findings from the survey were striking in this area. The overwhelming majority of participants, 97%, either agreed or strongly agreed with the phrase, ‘I feel the job I do is worthwhile’, with 67% either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, ‘I am happy in my work’. Responses are detailed in the table below:

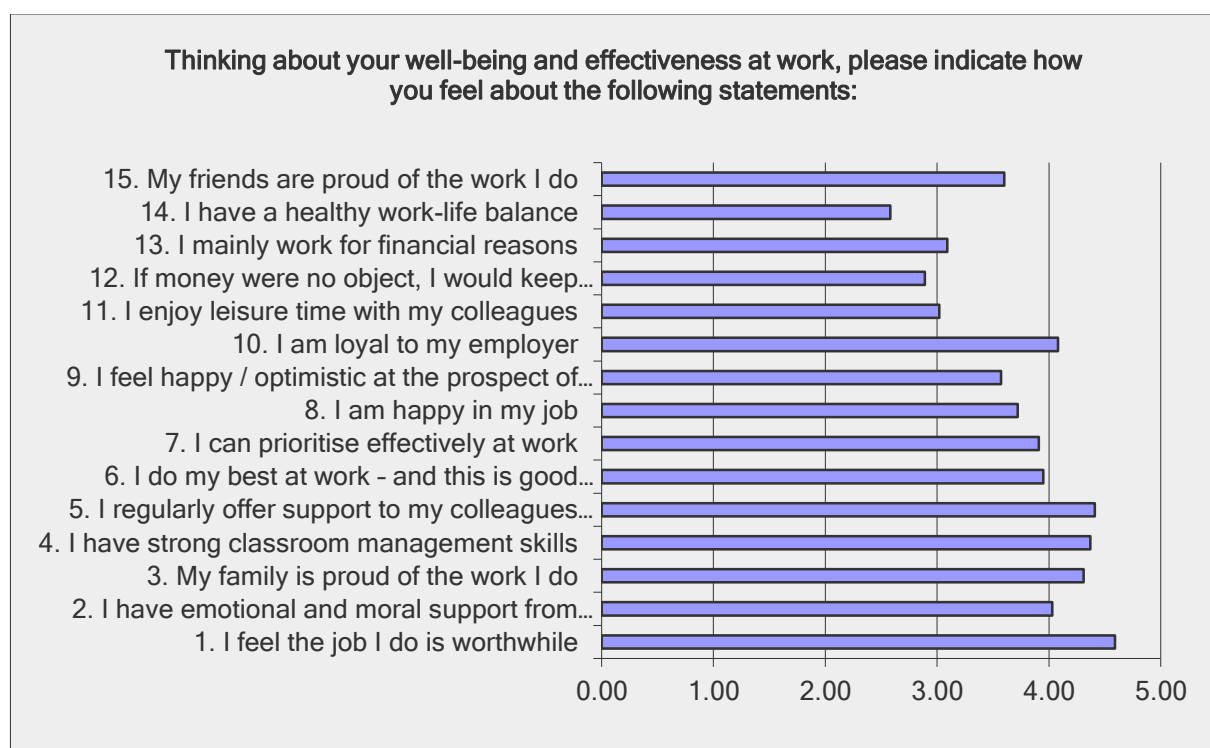


Table 2: Positive influences on teacher-parent identity

However, when it comes to work-life balance, the response is far less positive. In response to the statement, ‘I have a healthy work-life balance’, 56% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Further questioning reveals that guilt, stress, depression and worry over financial

matters are key factors: 71% of participants indicate that they regularly experience feelings of guilt that they are neglecting their duties at home; 63% of respondents indicate that they ‘regularly feel stressed, depressed or overwhelmed when balancing work and family’ and 65% either agree or strongly agree that they worry about the family finances. These responses are detailed below:

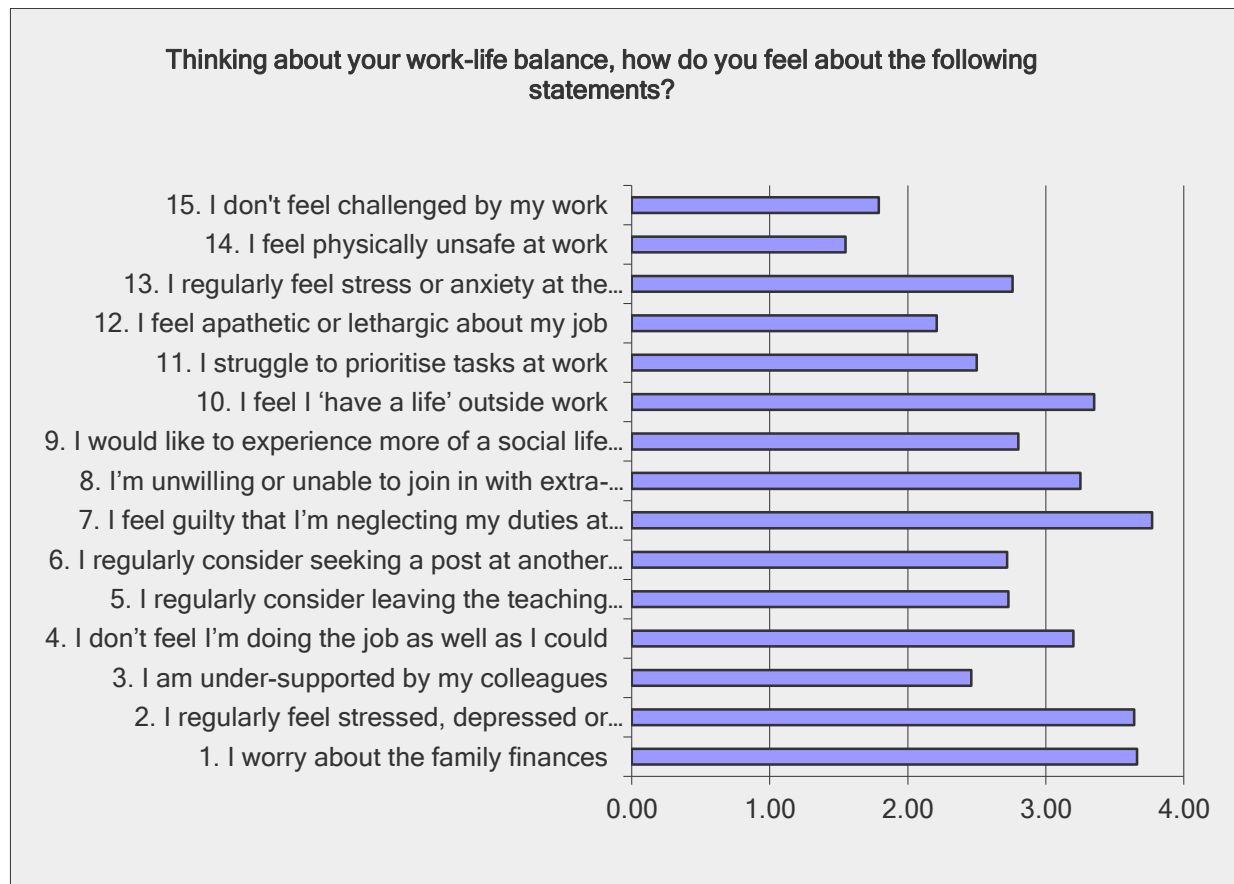


Table 3: Negative influences on teacher identity

This fundamental contradiction becomes a refrain through the findings from the data. Overwhelmingly, teacher-parents are convinced of the vital importance of each of the roles of teacher and parent, ‘the two most important jobs on the planet, I would argue’ (male focus group participant), but the compatibility of the two leads to frequent doubt and questioning, particularly when it comes to issues of demands of time and the self. This reflects Nias’s findings that self-doubt and anxiety are frequently associated with conflict and change (2004, p.224) in different contexts and at different times, which this chapter goes on to explore.

Workload is a key issue for teachers in the maintained sector in contemporary Britain, with many claiming the issue is reaching crisis point and that the country is ‘sleepwalking into the UK’s

worst teacher recruitment crisis', according to the former education secretary (Morris, 2015). That this theme is a crucial one for teachers is reflected in the prominence workload and the performativity agenda have according to the research participants. In the focus groups, this is a subject on which leads teachers to speak more loudly, faster and with a greater sense of urgency. When participants speak of the issue of workload, they have a tendency to interrupt in order to voice agreement and share their own experiences in the area. Simon, senior leader and father to a baby, speaks of the 'work ethic' which led him to work excessively long hours prior to having his daughter:

I would work really long hours, sort of eleven, twelve hour days. Almost – almost on a matter of principle sometimes. It was really odd. You know, that sort of work ethic that - I think my Mum had that sort of work ethic and it rubbed off on me, and I thought I've to keep doing – going til I've finished.

The fact that, since becoming a parent, Simon has come to perceive this approach as 'really odd' reflects that fact that he is working in a context where he has had the option to adjust his working hours with no significant negative impact on his performance.

However, as highlighted by the literature, the 'self-investment' (Nias, 1987, p.181) required in teaching is potentially limitless and it is hardly surprising demands of the job inevitably put extra pressure on family life. This is certainly reflected in the working hours of the respondents. According to the survey, more than half of the respondents work between 11 and 20 hours extra a week – this averages out to between 2 and 4 hours per working day. Strikingly, 12% of teachers (including 20% of SLT and 38% of headteachers) claim to work more than 25 hours per week outside prescribed school hours. These figures are broadly the same for male and female respondents, and confirm the perception that the higher up the 'career ladder' teachers climb, the greater the demands on their time outside the school day become.

The most extreme example of excessive working hours and their impact on wellbeing and work-life balance come from an experienced senior leader with a successful career behind her before becoming a parent. Though she now enjoys a successful career in another context, unlike Simon, she refused, as a point of principle, to allow early parenthood to affect her working schedule. She relates her experience with passion and animation:

When I went back after having [my daughter]... ah, I just quietly had meltdown after meltdown – 'cause I was on, like, no sleep. And I'm meant to be – I did 70, 80 hours a week! And I'm still doing 70, 80 hours per week. Because how could I not, because that's my job and what I'm paid for – but I was doing it on- an hour and a half's kip a night. [...].

So I would have – I would find quiet places around the room – or the building, where I would just have... quiet meltdowns. And go around with make-up... and then I resigned! [...] Within two months of going back after maternity leave, I resigned... To the relief of... everybody. [...] But I was thinking, I'm going to have a nervous breakdown here. Something's going to give here... It was impossible. Absolutely impossible! You know, the Head was great. And she said, you don't need to do this. You don't need to do this. It's such a big decision. You can leave. I left early one day, ahead of all the teachers on capability – who I had on capability. I left with them. The same car park! We all left together.

Kate's story is punctuated with frequent self-deprecating laughter and murmurs of empathy and compassion from the rest of the focus group. And yet, her flippant approach belies a truly worrying story of vulnerability and emotional and physical burnout resulting from the pressure that she experienced with regard to a perceived link between success at work and long working hours. Her 'quiet burnouts' suggest shame, secrecy and an inability or unwillingness to admit to struggling with the balance between work and parenthood and her resignation 'to everyone's relief' suggests a sense that, despite her best efforts, she had failed to meet perceived expectations.

Interestingly, it would appear from her recounting of the story that the pressure came primarily from within. Her headteacher ultimately gave her 'permission' to leave at a reasonable hour, but her reference to 'teachers on capability' is telling: these would be teachers who are subject to preliminary disciplinary proceedings – initiated by Kate herself - due to poor performance at work. The memory of her 'leaving the car park' at the same time as them reveals that, despite her admission that her working hours at the time were unsustainable, Kate clearly still perceives her leaving early on just one day as having 'failed' or 'given up'.

This extreme account of perfectionism, unreasonable expectations and striving for the impossible is one that is echoed by others' experiences. However, for Katya, mother of two older boys, there is a pragmatism that has come about since becoming a parent, and letting go of the perfectionism didn't result in the disasters she had feared:

You compromise on some things, you know, whereas you just kept doing it and doing it and doing it until it's perfect... and that's it – so, some things... and the world surprisingly doesn't collapse – whereas you always thought it would – 'I've got to get that exactly right!'

Whilst the external pressures on teachers are undeniable, this research would suggest that there are times when teachers become their own worst enemies, and that barriers to a healthy work-

life balance come as frequently from perceived – possibly false, and frequently unreasonable – ideas of success at work.

With regard to the impact of parenthood on perceived performance or success at work, an in-depth analysis of the questionnaire data reveals some less obvious and more surprising patterns. It is worth highlighting again that the questionnaire is the only fully anonymous mode of data collection, and that the focus groups discussions tended to lead to concurrence and accord with more dominant views, so these apparently anomalous findings are of particular interest.

Of the 1,604 questionnaire respondents, 75% claim that parenthood had an impact on their performance. The gap between the genders is minimal in this case: 72% men and 77% women. When asked further whether the impact is positive or negative, 30% of men in the questionnaire report a significant improvement in their performance. This echoes the overriding view in focus groups that parenthood gives men's performance at work a positive impetus: 'I've now started thinking about, whatever achievement I make, that's adding value to my child, so whereas before it might have been, so yeah, I'm happy to do this and I'm alright... I [now] want to give the best to my child' (father of a new baby).

However, the same proportion of male questionnaire respondents – 30% - report a significant deterioration in their performance as a result of being or becoming parents. This is a theme that is notably absent from the focus group discussions. This, of course, depends heavily on how 'successful performance' at work is defined. As explored in the literature review, there is a clear performativity agenda (Day, 2007; Murray, 2012), yet it is notable that no teachers who participated in the data collection refer to examination results or payment by performance as a way of measuring success. Instead, improved relationships within the classroom and beyond, an improved ability to prioritise and improved time-management are key measures of positive performance at work.

For women, whilst findings on impact on career aspirations are quite significant, as explored below, when reporting impact on their day-to-day performance at work, their response is more measured than for their male counterparts, with 39% reporting a 'slight improvement' and 35% a 'slight deterioration' in performance.

These findings would suggest that, contrary to what I may have anticipated, the perceived impact of parenthood on performance is more dramatic for male teachers than for female ones. This gives rise to questions around perception and measures of improvement which are of interest, yet fall beyond the scope of this study.

Overall, however, whilst the majority of respondents of both genders report reduced career aspirations, it is striking that the majority (65%) indicate their perception that their performance has improved, with over a quarter stating that it has 'significantly improved' since they became parents. This has clear implications for a proposed framework as to whether – and how – teachers are actually more effective at work and how this could be harnessed within the profession.

Another key factor which influences perceived impact on performance is the age of the participants' children. The older their children, the more likely teacher-parents are to report an improvement in their performance at work; 79% of parents of children aged 12-15 reported a slight or significant improvement in performance. Participants with a child under 1 were most likely to report a deterioration in performance (49%), yet it is significant that the majority still report an improved overall performance at work.

Teacher-parents who have made the decision to climb the career ladder are more assertive about the positive impact of parenthood on their overall performance, with 82% of headteachers and 67% of senior leaders indicating that their professional performance has slightly or significantly improved compared to 60% of mainscale teachers and 64% of middle leaders. This appears to contradict the perception of some teacher-parents that a decision to pursue their career to senior management will negatively impact on performance, yet it is important to make the distinction between performance and work and work-family balance, as improved performance at work does not necessarily imply improved effectiveness at home.

The impact of parenthood on career aspirations reveals some quite different findings; whilst the majority of teachers – and the vast majority of managers and leaders - perceive themselves to be more effective at work as the result of being parents, the negative impact of parenthood on career aspirations is more striking. This is explored in the following section.

6.2.3 The impact of parenthood on career aspirations

The findings of this study point to a clear gender divide which suggests the 'glass ceiling' (Hall, 1996) is firmly intact for women. Male participants generally claim that parenthood has had little to no negative impact on their careers and female participants regularly report that their aspirations are 'non-existent' or 'on-hold'. In fact, sixteen of the nineteen female focus group respondents make explicit reference to having suspended or wholly sacrificed any career aspirations as a direct result of becoming a parent, whereas only two male focus group respondents make any reference to prioritising their female partners' career over their own. This ongoing divide is, somewhat cautiously, acknowledged by a male focus group participant: 'I was just going to say, I think - I think there is – well - without sounding sexist – I think there is perhaps a different pressure with being... a man to a woman'.

In her blog, Chhatwal, chief programme officer of the Future Leaders trust, (TES, 2015), asserts that there is a clear 'motherhood penalty' and a 'fatherhood bonus' for those aspiring to school leadership'. This penalty is, according to Chhatwal, financial, with women reported to have their pay docked as a result of staying at home with sick children and female headteachers 50% more likely to start in the bottom third of the advertised pay range. There is, according to Chhatwal, also a personal cost...

... with women who reach headship being less likely to have children and having fewer children if they do. Some talked of delaying motherhood or "sacrificing" it altogether, such as the woman who commented that "being a senior leader is the biggest reason why I have not become a parent as ... I would be unable to give a child the attention and time they would require alongside my SLT duties." Others waited until their children were older before seeking headship.

Kate experienced the 'motherhood penalty' as a reality, having become pregnant whilst studying for the NPQH (a nationally recognised qualification in preparation for headship) and planning to apply for an upcoming headteacher vacancy:

And that job... I was going to go for. And there was just no way on God's planet I could do it once I got pregnant and the – the minute I announced that I was pregnant – everything changed. How I was dealt with by the equivalent of governors, how I was dealt with by them – everybody. [...] It was as if you were – very nicely – but you were written off.

Her plans to apply for headship were effectively abandoned due to her pregnancy.

The theme of sacrificed or suspended career aspirations for female teachers arose in each of the five focus groups, with participants extremely animated and assertive in their discussions around this issue, and with the issue taking up as much as 15 minutes of the sessions (which lasted up to 50 minutes in total). Notably, for the majority of female participants, anger and resentment at the lack of career aspirations was absent, replaced by a more pragmatic view and a presentation of a choice or a decision to put their families first. These participants willingly embrace their role as 'co-authors of their own narratives' (Zembylas, 2003a, p.108)

For Rama, a dominant voice in the first focus group, the decision to continue with her Head of Year responsibilities after the transition to parenthood was simply not feasible:

I actually gave up my responsibilities so that I could spend more time with my kids – erm – and I went part time, so I left being a Head of Year, cause I think that Head of Year job sort of start at 3.30, cause you've got to do the phone calls and all of those things. By doing that, I would have had to stay back a lot longer, which meant I would have missed out time with my own children, and if I didn't do that, and I went home at 4.00 – 3.30, whatever it was – I think I would have done an injustice to the kids I would have been a Head of Year for, so I decided to go part-time. [...] I don't have any career aspirations anymore. I don't. You know, I... See, the kids come first with me.'

In the same session, Anna responds immediately to concur 'at the moment - I wouldn't say never - but at the moment, while the kids are going to be young, I wouldn't dream of wanting to move up. At all.' In other groups, the refrain is similar: '[my career aspirations have] just gone completely down the drain', says Ilham. In a different session, Jessica, in a somewhat resigned tone says, 'I had aspirations, but they're never going to happen.' 'I've put all my aspirations on hold for now', says Veena, who, like Rama, has stepped down from her Head of Year role to a part-time mainscale post. 'I've chosen not to have any aspirations', asserts Sheena.

Aveling's longitudinal study indicates that young women's experiences of reality are at odds with the concept of 'equal opportunities', with her findings indicating that 'work patterns essentially replicated the employment patterns of women of an earlier generation' (2002, p.277). In a direct echo of Coleman's analysis of 'postponement strategy' (2002, p.72), Ruth, a deputy head, speaks of her decision to have a child and of acknowledging that this will inevitably have a negative impact on her career, effectively placing her behind her male colleagues who can continue to progress regardless.

I had to make that decision, if I stop now for a child, that's going to make a gap. I'd say, effectively puts you standing still... You know, at the time when you're kind of trying, you don't want stress, and then the – kind of – time when you're pregnant, you're not – can't

really push your career on then, and then coming back and actually getting a grip of all of those things that are changing, and managing it all – so actually, you’re probably looking at a five year block that kind of stops everything from moving forward...

Grace, an Advanced Skills Teacher reflects on a similar decision to suspend her career progression whilst her son is young:

I haven’t done anything for the past six years through choice, so I – you know – probably my next career step would be an assistant headteacher, possibly, but I’m not doing it. I’m not doing it, because I want to spend that time. And if I step up, I’m going to have more work to do and more responsibility, and I don’t want that yet. Cause I know when I go home at 2.15, which I do every day. [...] I get my – that time with my son, and I know, I think if I had more responsibility, I don’t think I could do that, so I’m on – I’m definitely just hanging there at the moment...

Ray, also married to a teacher, whilst explaining that both he and his wife have had to make financial compromises after having children, concludes with an admission that his wife’s career has been ‘absolutely trashed to pieces’.

This view is reflected in the stark questionnaire response which shows 80% of women indicating that their career aspirations had been affected compared to just 59% of men. A later question reveals 33% of participants believe being a mother prevents women from applying to leadership positions, compared to 4% who believe being a father prevents men from applying to leadership positions.

The picture for male teacher-parents appears to provide a marked contrast. Only two of the male focus group participants allude to a negative impact of parenthood on their career aspirations with others referring, directly or indirectly, to their financial responsibilities or their desire to make their families proud. Two male teacher-parents state that parenthood had had ‘no impact’ on their careers. Timothy, male teacher and father to two daughters under five, admits that his wife is the one who has been negatively affected, ‘because she’s had to give up her aspirations now, so she spends more time with the girls...’

Chhatwal’s research (TES, 2015), finds that, male leaders are more likely to be perceived positively as a result of being parents:

Fathers, on the other hand, often felt parenthood brought greater kudos. They were twice as likely as female leaders to think they were perceived more positively by governors after having children. They also found it a helpful strategy in building trust with parents, with one commenting that ‘I often use the line ‘as a parent myself...’. Many

felt parenthood made them better leaders, raising their expectations based on what would be good enough for their own children, and bringing greater empathy to their approach.

In two focus groups, there is an – occasionally sheepish – acknowledgment from participants of both genders that they have conformed to traditional gender roles, with men concerning themselves to a greater extent with the finances whilst women take on the majority of duties in the domestic arena. 'If you're a man, you feel this need to provide for a family,' acknowledges Charles, who admits his ambitions are linked primarily, at this stage, to earning extra money to pay the mortgage. In the same group, Catherine admits: that, 'the idea of money – I'm not saying that's not there, but I don't feel the pressure on myself as much as I think my husband does'.

For Eleanor too, traditional gender roles are simply the status quo in her family. She acknowledges that she is the primary carer and that a conscious effort has to be made, by agreement with her male partner, to 'opt out' of this where necessary:

My husband knows that every night I'm gonna have fed the kids, I'm gonna have them in bed, they're gonna be - even if he stays out, you know, for the whole day doing his ridiculously long hours - the children will be okay. Unless I opt out, unless I say to him, 'I'm not gonna be here on Sunday. You need to look after the kids. Women have to opt out. So if I say to Pete, my husband, on Sunday I need you to be the dad, you need to look after the kids, I've opted out. And he will only be the main carer if I tell him he has to opt in.

These teacher-mothers women have, with apparent good cheer, accepted traditional gender roles as a way of reconciling the roles of teacher and parent. A feminist analysis of these dominant voices would suggest that it is rather ironic, even concerning, that, in asserting their choice or 'agency', these women, like the young women in Aveling's study 'essentially replicated the employment patterns of women of an earlier generation' (2002, p.277). Furthermore, it could be argued that such conformity constitutes an attempt to create regressive 'norms' or 'conditions of worth' (Marcia, 1989, p.406) which discourage other women from asserting alternative and, arguably, more progressive views which challenge gender stereotypes.

Cowley (2015; referenced in Appendix 9) offers an alternative perspective. She acknowledges that women continue to take on the majority of duties in the domestic arena, but points out that the struggle to break with traditional gender roles exists for both men and women:

It is typically harder for women to mix work and home life, because we still tend to do the majority of the childcare and the housework. But at the same time I think it is hard for men to break away from expected gender roles as well, it's just that they have to do it in the opposite direction.

The dominant narrative in the focus groups suggests a simple dichotomy: choices are made based on pragmatism and personal preference and participants fall naturally into traditional gender roles, with the female more often than not stepping willingly aside to enable her male partner to pursue his aspirations. It is, however, worth noting that discussions on these issues were overwhelmingly dominated by certain female voices. On one occasion, a relatively withdrawn female member of the group – a single mother of an older child – pauses before quietly but assertively making her point: 'I don't think having a child stopped me doing what I needed to do career-wise.' Such challenges to the dominant narrative in a group are unusual, and it seems that she is keen to make the point that the picture of suppressed careers for women is not universal.

Men in the focus groups are noticeably quieter on the issue of the impact of parenthood on career. In response to the question: 'have your career aspirations been affected by being a parent?' on only one occasion does a man offer the first response. On this occasion, Keith reveals the following:

Can I start with that? Without a doubt. Again, I was older when we had children. I was 36 when we had our first child, 39 on the second, and - my wife was 32. She was deputy head of a secondary school and would have become head teacher, because the head teacher left shortly after - but she decided not to go back. And we'd arranged childcare, Ella was going to go to nursery five days a week. And then the health visitor came in and said 'What's your back-up if Ella's not well.' And suddenly it was like - haven't got any, cause we don't know anybody in this town. And at that point, Alison then made the decision - no, sorry, we made the decision - she dropped to point four at a school I was working at, just two days a week, and we put Ella into nursery and moved to another town where we had family. And I made a conscious decision then that I was going to stay at the same level - I've been head of humanities at two different schools - and it's definitely affected my career aspirations, cause I'll be forty nine at the end of this month. I've tried to apply for assistant headteacher jobs, assistant principal jobs this year, quite a few - and last year - and didn't even get to an interview stage. [...] I'm not bitter about that in any way, cause I made that decision. I chose not to pursue that career while my children were young. Cause, as I said, for me, being there to support my wife was more important than perhaps chasing the next level. And I'll never ... I'll not judging anyone who's done that, that's a decision each individual makes, but for me, yeah, it affected my career.

For Keith, the sacrifice of aspirations is one that has been shared between him and his wife. The concept 'having it all' (Cowley, 2015) appears to act either as an incentive to succeed or, more

often, as a source of tension, particularly between women with different perspectives on work-life balance and career progression. To represent either unrealistic expectations or a sense that anything is – or should be – possible, but Cowley states, ‘I feel like a party-pooper for saying it, but I don’t think it’s possible for women or men to “have it all”’.

For Ray, an assistant headteacher, the glass ceiling represents a reality for him as a father of two children, and he has made the decision not to pursue his career any further:

I would say that I gave up any thought of being a head teacher after having children. And I'm not blaming them for that - probably good for me, I don't think I'd make a very good head teacher anyway ... Certainly, that, and now I'm kind of in the - quite unlikely I could become deputy either. I explore kind of avenues on a sort of - on the same level up - because you can't go any higher than I am without losing your entire life to work... There is a ceiling beyond which you can't break through. I'm amazed that head teachers manage to have any family at all, to be honest.

In his blog, MrSeniorLeader explores this issue with an honesty and reflectiveness that reveals that fathers who are teachers can experience the conflicts and dilemmas of teacher-parenthood as intensely as do their female colleagues:

As my children develop and grow, the challenge for me is to try to ‘walk the tightrope’ between my responsibilities as a father and as a senior leader. This is something that, as I take more responsibility in the school setting, I am finding increasingly difficult. I constantly question whether I am giving my children enough of myself and does school get more than its pound of flesh? What I am sure of is the fact that I am asking myself the question shows that it is something I am constantly challenging myself on and this in turn, means that fatherhood is always my priority.

In the section above, it was noted that male participants in the questionnaire perceive parenthood as having a more dramatic impact on their performance at work than female participants. If we turn to the issue of the impact of parenthood on career aspirations in the context of the questionnaire, there is a similar layer of complexity that is worth noting: 81% of all questionnaire respondents who claim that parenthood had had an impact on their career aspirations also indicated that their career aspirations have been slightly or significantly reduced. In line with ‘traditional’ gender roles, the gap between male and female respondents in terms of an increase in career aspirations is significant; 32% of male teachers say career aspirations significantly or slightly increased, compared to just 16% of women. However, significantly more male questionnaire respondents report a significant negative impact in their career aspirations, with 47% of men claiming their career aspirations have significantly decreased compared to 38%

of women. This data would suggest that the impact of parenthood – either positive or negative – on career aspirations tends to be felt more acutely by male research participants.

Where research participants appear to be most satisfied with their work-life balance, teamwork is key, with a balance of sacrifices and benefits for both parties. Ray speaks of the need to regard the family holistically:

I think ... if ... you need to look at families holistically if you can, with this, I think. I imagine if you look at individuals, it would be quite a strong individual who would drive their career and bring up a family on their own. I became assistant head a year after my daughter was born. And always had the agreement with my wife: a) that I'd need her support to do it, whatever that meant; and b) that if it got too much I was just gonna chuck it in the bin. And for the first couple of years I survived, based on that sort of concept.

There appears to be an overriding perception amongst research participants that for one partner to become a headteacher or a deputy is feasible, given the right context and a positive support network, but there is a serious question mark over whether it would be possible for both partners to pursue their careers to their ultimate aims. Ray concludes: 'I would say it's not possible for two teachers to follow their careers to the absolute zenith without... You know, someone's got to, someone's got to suffer.' There are clear murmurs of accord in the background of the focus group as he says this. This would be a question worthy of further exploration.

With regard to other factors which influence career aspirations for teacher-parents, the age of the youngest child of each participant is significant: the older their youngest child is, the less likely teachers are to claim that parenthood has had an impact on their career aspirations. Of teacher-parents whose youngest child is over 25, 44% of teachers claim an impact on their career aspirations, but 80% of participants whose youngest child is between one and three report an impact on aspirations.

In terms of professional status, headteachers are the group least likely to report an impact of parenthood on career aspirations, with 52% reporting an impact compared to 83% of mainscale teachers. This is the case for headteacher of both genders (bearing in mind that 62 of the 94 headteachers who participated in the questionnaire were female) and reveals a focus and determination which could be associated with the characteristics required to be successful in the job.

6.3 Balancing roles

In this section, I analyse what the data reveals with regard to how teachers balance teaching and parenthood. The terminology used by research participants is quite telling. In texts from focus groups, blogs and open-ended questionnaire responses, terms such as ‘juggling’ (22 occurrences), ‘making it work’, ‘struggling’ (27 references), ‘tipping’ (9 references), and ‘battling’ (3 references) indicate the delicate and frequently difficult quest to maintain a sense of equilibrium and stability when reconciling the identities of teacher and parent.

The precarious and fragile state in which teacher-parents frequently find themselves is a source of frequent self-questioning and review, especially given that the dominant voices tend to be those who represent a bias towards work over family, as highlighted by Keith, a focus group participant:

[It’s] a very delicate balance indeed. And one that needs to be kept under constant review, so because - like Lee, my wife and I are both teachers. And it's very easy to lean far too far towards the work in the work-life balance... ‘cause there's lots of voices that will encourage you to go that way and feel bad about yourself if you don't. There's not really that many voices saying, No, you know, take regular time with your children - make sure you put in proper, invest the time.

The need for regular compromise between the two roles is highlighted repeatedly by research participants. In fact, this is seen as absolutely essential by one mother and focus group participant: ‘I just think something has to give, otherwise I think you burn out. I think you’ve really got to have a good balance.’

Martindale, a first-time blogger who accepted the invitation to reflect on combining teaching and parenthood chooses balance as the theme of her piece, and begins by calling the very notion of balance into question:

Let’s get it straight from the offset - for me, there is no such thing as balance. When your everyday life is chaotic and illogical, and unpredictability is the only thing you can predict, you don’t really find yourself measuring balance (2015).

Martindale calls into question the tendency of parent-teachers to spend too much time focusing on achieving the ‘perfect balance’ and that this, in fact, becomes another source of guilt and conflict:

Where did this concept of having the perfect work/life balance come from? In my opinion, it's just another stick to bash us all with: like making time for yourself and remembering you're not just a parent, but a person, too. Give me a break- I'm still trying to work out how to work smarter, not harder (Say what?!) (ibid.).

Wilson finds the concept of 'having it all' equally unhelpful:

There have been a lot of discussions on Staffrm and Twitter in the last few months about 'having it all' and whether this is realistic and possible. The phrase itself offends a few of us; I am more interested in learning from others in how they 'make it work' or 'juggle personal and professional responsibilities (July 2015).

6.3.1 Role Enrichment and Role Conflict

As a pragmatic and practitioner-based piece of research, when examining the factors that affect teachers at micro-, meso- and macro-level, it is necessary to identify through the research: What works? What strategies or factors are effective in promoting a positive work-life balance for teacher-parents? What are the enablers for teacher parents, and what benefits do they experience in the professional role as the result of being parents? What doesn't work? What are the barriers and the challenges which lead to role conflict and lack of a healthy work-family balance?

This chapter goes on in the next two sections to analyse the research findings with regard to these two crucial questions.

Drawing on the key themes from the data collection, the analysis of role enrichment and role conflict, or enablers and barriers, has been subdivided according to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory model:

At micro-level, the focus is on close relationships and the minutiae of daily life and how these impact upon wellbeing and identity. At meso level, these questions concern themselves with school culture – 'the way we do things around here' (Deal & Kennedy, 1983); the day-to-day procedures, rules and expectations and their impact on the identity, wellbeing and aspirations of teacher-parents. At macro level, this is about the impact of government policy on teacher-parents, but more significantly, about perceived or actual societal expectations of mothers and fathers who teach.

Variations on the adapted version of Bronfenbrenner's model illustrate, at the beginning of each section, the main themes highlighted by the research participants.

6.3.2 Role enrichment

I have chosen the term 'role enrichment' to capture 'what works' for teacher parents. When discussing role enrichment, it is firstly worth noting that the material in the data collection weighs in favour of a positive perception of the two roles. Teachers regularly identify and celebrate the compatibility and mutual benefits of combining the two roles and celebrate the factors that allow them to feel successful in both roles and regularly communicate the 'joy, excitement, exhilaration and deep satisfaction' (Nias, 1996, p.297) associated with successfully balancing the roles.

This comes across particularly strongly in the focus groups, though it is worth noting that certain voices remain more silent than others.

6.3.2.1 Role Enrichment at Micro Level

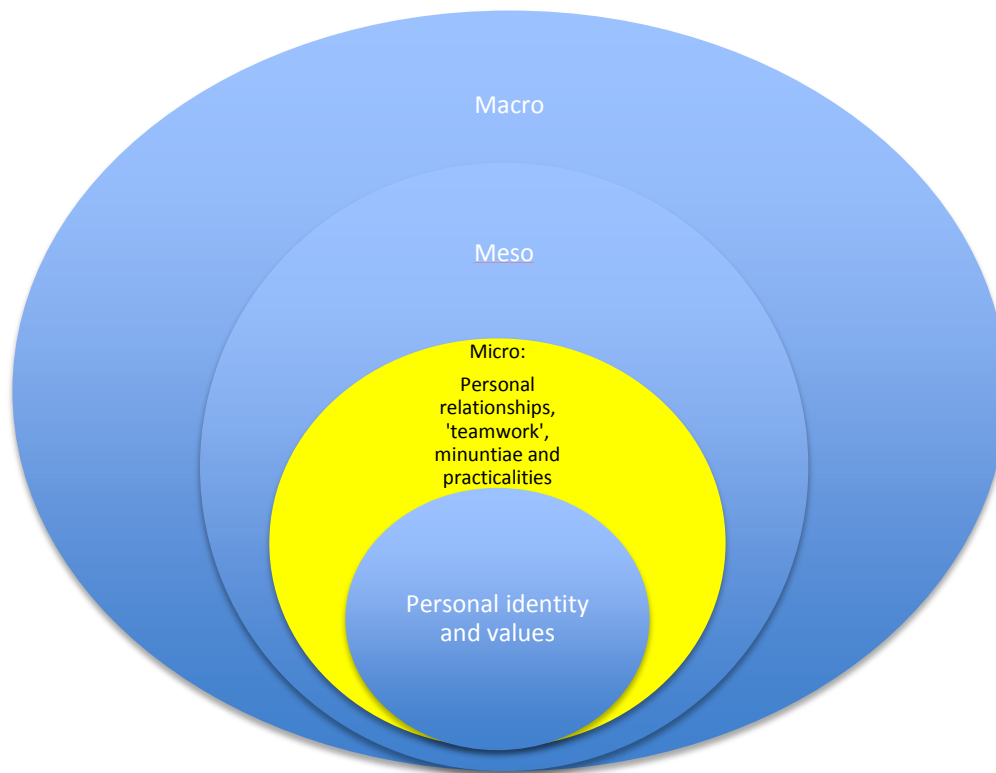


Figure 6: Role enrichment at micro level

The role of supportive relationships with those closest to teacher-parents cannot be overstated in this research and reflects the findings of Coleman, who finds that negotiation and compromise between partners is key (2002, p.61). When asked to name the single biggest enabler when balancing the two roles, 74% of questionnaire participants cite 'a supportive partner' and 49% 'support from extended family'. Six of the focus group participants directly relate their dependence on childcare from extended family to allow them to pursue their working lives effectively alongside parenthood.

The need for clear communication, compromise, solidarity and teamwork for teachers with a partner at home is repeatedly asserted by focus group participants. For Louisa, a female middle leader who has chosen to pursue her aspirations, 'it's just all about teamwork' with her husband. The need for flexibility and a willingness to swap roles where necessary is highlighted by Ray:

We share the responsibilities of looking after the family equally between. You know there [are] certain roles I play and certain roles [my wife] plays, and we can even swap those over, you know, we back each other up.

The research reveals that early parenthood is where teacher-parents are likely to experience most strain on both personal and professional levels, rendering the need for solid partnership all the more crucial. Pete, a middle leader, acknowledges that, whilst his job is stressful and demanding, he needs to ensure he prioritises support of his wife and their two young children and that there is a clear boundary between work and home:

When I'm at home, I've got to sort of give [my wife] as much support as possible, because she's been there all day with two very young children, and she's right at the end of her tether by the time I walk in, and then by the time I've bathed them, helped feed them, and helped get them to bed, reading bed-time stories and what have you, cooked our dinner, then settled down, it's actually incredibly late, and for me, to function at work – properly, I need to have at least some down-time, so, the big thing for me has been, you know, to be much more, you know, effective in my time management.

Time for rest and down-time for teacher-parents is extremely limited but, like Pete, Grace ensures she makes time for adequate sleep and time with her family by working as efficiently as possible during the school day:

My head is down, 'cause I know the more work I get done – in school – when I get home, that time is for my son. I don't work at all. It's only as soon as I go to be that then I start working again, and the more I get done in school, the earlier I get to go to bed.

The investment of self in what is essentially an extremely emotionally demanding job means that, 'it's important to switch off, or else you do – you can - get too emotionally involved'. Veena makes time for a walk or to go to the gym on a regular basis as a reprieve from the 'constant noise' and communication involved in balancing the two roles.

Research findings indicate that teacher-parents appreciate their holidays, with the overwhelming majority of teachers (82%) citing the school holidays as the single biggest enabler when balancing teaching and parenthood. Others acknowledge that, although the workload is heavy, there is the option to take work home and leave early when necessary: 'I think – I think [teaching] is not a bad profession to be in. Although we do have the marking and everything else, at least I have the option to take it home and do it when I can do it' (Anna). Ray is of that view that:

It's the ideal job I think for a family, as long as you - for me - as long as you take that view of 'This is the time for family and this is the time for work.' Because obviously you get the holidays books and after six weeks [...] you're delighted to come back to school. [laughs] And just that, you know, if I wanted to I can say - tonight I'm gonna leave at twenty past three because I need to help out.

For a significant number of research participants, their profession has had a positive impact on communication with their own children, who compare their own school experiences with those of their teacher-parents:

They seem to appreciate the fact that I'm a teacher... And they like us to make questions about my schools, things that I do. For instance, when they have sports day, they are asking do we have sports day, and that interests them. Even, they are happy for me to help them with their work now. Don't know how it will be when they get older – but at the moment they're really happy to work with me

Veena is visibly proud of her discovery that her daughter, at nursery, had told her teachers, 'I want to be a teacher [like Mummy]'. In Findlater's blog (2015), she explains that her decision to pursue her career having had a baby daughter is linked to her desire to 'show my daughter that you can be a great mama and also be a great career woman too. That is important for me as the mother of a daughter.' In a similar vein, modelling a positive work ethic for her own children to learn from is important to Sylvie: 'Don't you think your children learn from that – from seeing their parents' work ethic?'

In summary, role enrichment at meso level is dominated by the following factors at micro level: supportive close relationships, an appreciation of the holidays and the potential for flexible working hours and a desire to provide a positive influence on teacher-parents' own children.

6.3.2.2 Role Enrichment at Meso Level

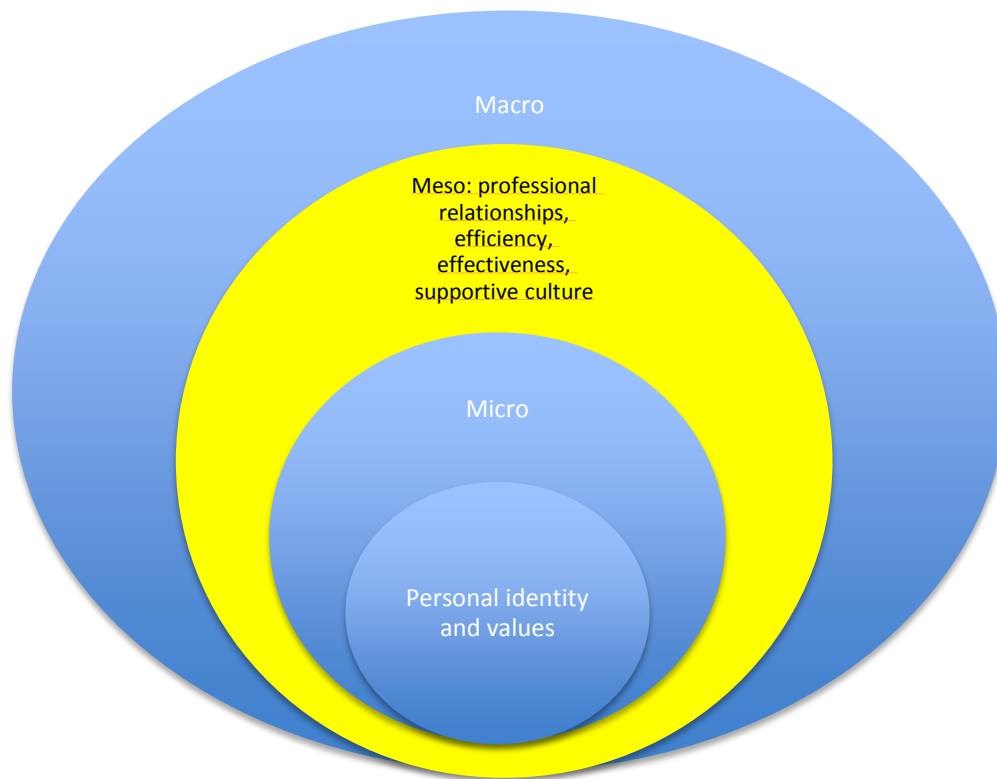


Figure 7: Role enrichment at meso level

This section, on role enrichment at meso level, focuses on the positive influences being a parent has on teachers in the professional area and on the factors within the educational institution which enable teacher-parents to balance the roles effectively and achieve optimum performance in their roles. The main themes revealed by the data analysis were: the quality of professional relationships with students, colleagues and parents; efficiency, effectiveness and time-management and the vital importance of a supportive school culture.

Teachers in the study who offer an opinion tend to agree that parenthood has had a positive influence on their teaching, with 65% of questionnaire respondents claiming that their performance has 'improved' or 'significantly improved' as the result of being a parent. The positive impact of parenthood on her teaching is summarised by Ruth:

I think being a parent changes you, and your outlook on life, and so I think therefore it has a knock-on effect on the relationships that you have – so I think – I think it makes you look at things in a slightly different way, and I think that that's to the bonus of the people you deal with.

Relationships with, and positive influences upon, students dominate in discussions around role-enrichment, reflecting the findings in the literature review that the relationship with students is the primary impetus for joining, and remaining in, the profession (Spilt, Koomen & Thijs, 2011, p.460).

When probed as to exactly how being a parent has enhanced their performance as teachers, empathy, compassion and an improved understanding of ‘how children tick’ (Sue) are dominant themes. Having your own children helps you to appreciate the value of the profession and of the young people in your care more acutely: ‘[my teaching] definitely improved [...] it’s improved the way I want to be as a teacher and the way I want to be as a member of staff to the children in school (Jessica). The specific strengths and needs of her own children have had a direct influence on Ilham’s understanding of the students in her care over time:

I’ve got one child who’s got special needs, and the older one is Gifted and Talented – so, it’s made me empathise with what a special needs child requires, you know, if they have needs. And, you know, what a gifted and talented requires. And it – it has actually – in time, it does help inform your teaching.

FabEnglishTeacher reflects in her blog (2015) that, since becoming a parent, she has developed a better understanding of youth culture and a greater interest in her students’ lives and what motivates them.

Many participants make explicit reference to the management of behaviour, and of having developed a more profound understanding of what motivated specific behaviours and more effective strategies as to how negative behaviours can be handled in the classroom.

This is reflected in Anna’s response to the question: ‘How has being a parent influenced you as a teacher?’

I think what... you look at the way you deal with your own kids, and you start to think about how can you manage the kids in the classroom. Not in a similar way, but obviously you just realise that – that everyone’s a little individual, with a reason as to why they’re behaving the way they behave – and it helps you to look at the whys for the behaviour.

Catherine considers that the strategies used with her young son are frequently just as effective with teenagers in the classroom:

I really understand the value of consequences, and clear instructions. [...] It’s about realising that sometimes the way you speak to a fifteen year old is not that different than

how you speak to a two year old. They need clear instructions and clear consequences. [...] I'm quite shocked how I use the same tone of voice, or command, for lack of a better word with a fifteen year old as I do to my two year old son [laughs].

Another respect in which parenthood enhances teacher performance, according to the research participants is in terms of a greater appreciation of the importance of clear communication around the day-to-day practicalities involved in sending one's child to school. Ruth explains:

You suddenly realise how important that is, you know, where we all understand secondary terms - we've got it, but, you know, people who don't understand it - and - and - as a parent with [my son] going up to another school, actually it's like I don't know anything, and I'm like, you know, I wonder how the music lessons work and how are we going to pay for dinner, he might not get dinner, and you know - all those worries that - that anybody would have... suddenly you realise the importance of school communication and being very clear.

Parenthood offers a new layer of understanding of parents' interests and concerns in a professional context, with a focus group participant admitting to spending far longer with parents at parents' evenings than she did previously because she feels she 'owes it back' (Jessica) and having to be thrown out of school later by the disgruntled caretakers. A senior leader describes how she uses her own children's experiences and challenges to empathise directly with parents, sometimes with some creative license:

I've used it a huge amount as Head of 6th [form]. I've been through this, I know what it's like, my daughter when she applied to university, such and such. So, I - I think that can be very helpful in terms of empathising with - and sometimes I - I - I fib - I say my child did that, or my child did that, whatever - to - just suits the context. So it has been - I think, helpful to say, I've been where you are. And I - transition I think is massive for parents, you know, Year 6 into 7 and 11 into 12 (Frances).

As a parent yourself, it's possible to build up a high degree of trust with parents of your students: 'They can empathise, and they can see the genuine feeling there'. The identification of shared experiences with parents of students creates a bond that might not have otherwise existed, according to MrSeniorLeader (2015) in his blog:

In these moments there appears to be a realisation that 'this teacher knows what I am going through.' This can allow a conversation to take a different course and can allow parents to be much less guarded.

Most significantly, for Chivers, these improved relationships with both students and their parents taught him during his career the importance of teamwork in a professional context:

I learned, as a teacher, to look more closely at each individual child and to work closely with their parents, so that there were no hidden agendas. This honest approach enabled

parents to approach the school and to rapidly resolve issues, as we carried out promises. Teachers, parents and children worked as a team (2015).

In a focus group, Kate reflects on her improved performance as a manager and leader, having, prior to a parent, struggled to empathise with the challenges faced by teacher-parents:

From a management point of view [...] 'cause I've been in senior management for a while, and dealt with – obviously had lots of people to – to line-manage, and I think really, [I used to do it] by the book. I was very supportive visually but inside I was thinking, for God's sake, why can't they just be organized – I didn't have any children, and [my daughter] came very late in life. So it would just be – I can't understand why you can't have level one, two and three for childcare... I kind of have a... more of an understanding that life doesn't quite work like that.

The view that positive relationships are key to an effectively functioning working environment (Loe, 2015) is reflected in the accounts of many focus group participants. Their positive experiences appear to run contrary to Zembylas' concerns with increased individuality and isolation (Zembylas, 2003a, p.119) and Hargreaves' finding that positive relationships with colleagues are 'the exception rather than the norm' (Hargreaves, 2001, p.523). It should, however, be emphasised that focus group participants present overwhelmingly positive perspectives on their institutions and that the sample is inevitably skewed, as highlighted in Chapter 5.

One speaks laughingly of becoming a parent like 'joining an adult club' (Ayoub, a new parent). Ruth comments on the value of having others around who understand the challenges of balancing parenthood and work:

And you can look at someone with just a raised eyebrow, and you know they understand so much, and I think that's... when you're away from your children. Having to leave your children in the day is heart-wrenching anyways, but when some of the people around you understand where you're coming from, that's a really nice feeling to have...

This sense of community and solidarity is a genuine source of comfort and support when balancing the roles of teaching and parenthood and its importance is highlighted by several other research participants:

I didn't really appreciate [...] – initially – I didn't think about how important that would be to me, to have others – in a school you have so many people, and there's so many people that you can reach out to if you've got questions, or... (Grace).

On three occasions, when I remained at the beginning or end of the formal focus group, there was evidence of this solidarity, with teacher-parents sharing photographs of their children and

commenting on details of their own and others' lives of which they were not previously aware. 'It was great to have this forum to discuss our children', said one participant, commenting that such opportunities do not often arise in the working day.

The value – and scarcity – of time is revealed as a hugely significant theme in this research project: 'As every parent knows, having children teaches you the value of time' (Martindale, 2015). In one focus group, the participants discuss, with evident amusement, how little they valued the preciousness of time prior to becoming parents:

Catherine: Do you not look back and think, what was I doing?

Grace: Yes [laughter] I just did my work, and – you know – went out occasionally – what was I doing?

Catherine: I used to be -[...] All my time was full, but full of what? Whereas now, it feels like. [...] Yes, I used to leave late at night, sometimes as late as seven o'clock, and now I have to leave at five to get to childcare

Ruth: Yes

Catherine: - so every day I have to be there before five

Ruth: And there's no choice, so – it just to be

Catherine: But it works! You know, somehow, you get it done.

This exchange highlights a 'needs must', pragmatic approach to the transition to parenthood; things change, quite simply, because they must. This shift in priorities is a necessity, and the consequence of this is that many teacher-parents are conscious of being far more efficient in their day-to-day routines. Whilst a significant minority feel that their performance has slightly or significantly deteriorated as the result of becoming a parent (31% and 3% respectively, according to questionnaire responses), the evidence weighs heavily in favour of improved efficiency and effectiveness:

Studies have not found evidence that parents are significantly less productive in their jobs. On the contrary, school leaders (whether parents or not) feel that being a parent adds another dimension to school leadership, and those with children often report how becoming a parent has made them more efficient (Chhatwal, 2015).

The importance of rigorous planning is highlighted by focus group participant, Katya:

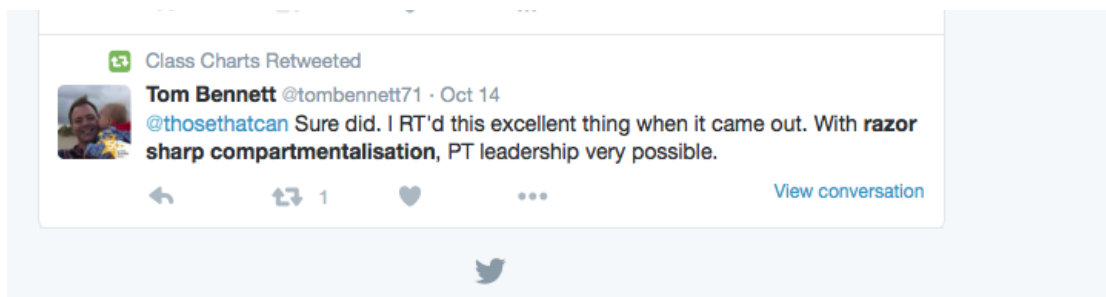
It really makes you more efficient and more organised sometimes, you know. Like you said, you know – it's really true. I feel that as well. You know, my cut-off point is 5.15 when I will be leaving. And so you try to plan that day and every minute. And sort of, you know what you're going to do and you get it done – cause you know you don't have that extra time.

There are times when getting her 'head down' and 'work [her] socks off' to get as much work done as possible during the working day, reflects Grace, is to the detriment of social interaction with her colleagues, but she sees this as a necessity.

Creating as much time as possible to devote to family necessitates at times refusing to take on extra duties and responsibilities - something that Simon would not have considered prior to having his daughter:

Having a kid [...] just made me think, well, I can't do both. I can't work these hours and be a – be a father, so I've – I've been much better at time management now. I even say no sometimes, which wasn't something I did. [Laughter] I used to say yes to everything. I honestly did. You know. And I'd get so much to do that I couldn't do it, so I'd work twelve hour days to try and get it done, and often it wasn't done that well, cause I had too much to do. So I'm a little bit better at cutting the cloth, and I certainly work more effectively.

'Razor sharp compartmentalisation' is essential to balancing the two roles effectively, according to Bennett in a Twitter conversation on the topic of balancing part-time school leadership and parenthood:



For other teachers, particularly those with younger children, the decision not to take work home has been key to balancing work and family effectively:

The big thing that's changed for me since I've been a parent is, I just – I very, very rarely take work home. I think, the important thing for me now, especially with them as very young children, is having a real, sort of distinguishing line between work and home (Pete).

The theme of a supportive school culture is raised in all areas of the research, and is revealed to be pivotal to effective work-life balance for teacher-parents. The emphasis on the key role of school leaders in fostering a supportive culture reinforces the findings in the literature (see, for example, Skaalvik, 2009, p.1066). It is, however, worth reiterating that, in focus groups in particular, which were based at the schools themselves and contained a mixture of senior leaders and mainscale teachers, participants were particularly keen to present their own schools in a positive light, and that this may have coloured the findings.

A degree of understanding of the challenges of balancing teaching and parenting leads to a situation where 'we all understand each other better' and creates a positive climate in the school as 'micro society' (Sylvie, focus group participant). A supportive culture manifests itself in various forms, but significantly, teachers see the minutiae and day-to-day practicalities as evidence of feeling valued and supportive as parents. Katy, a focus group participant speaks of being able to bring her own child to school during her early days as a single parent:

[My son] just came everywhere with me, um, and the kids helped look after him, and I remember the really naughty kids were really brilliant, in that I would, you know, I'd have after-show – after-school shows to rehearse and so on, so [my son] just came, and they'd walk around the playground, pushing the buggy and so on.

At another school, the participants reflect on how helpful it is to be able to bring their own children to extra-curricular events:

Agnes: There's never been an issue about bringing your children into school. If something happens, or they've got a training day, then bring them in - we'll find something to do with them, somebody will entertain them if needs be. Somebody will look after them. And although we don't have a creche here, we kind of almost do if we needed one. I mean, you couldn't do it every single day, but ... that would be ridiculous ... but at the same time, there's never this 'What's your child doing here?' [...] Probably all of our children have been running around here [the school building] at some point. And they quite like it here, cause they can run around this particularly they love it.

Eleanor: They do. It's got a really good surface for scooting.

Agnes: And sliding along the floor as Ezra and Katie found during one of the evenings...

Laura: But the [...] floor is really great for scooting...

To feel that not only are their children permitted in the school but are actively welcomed and enjoy being there is highlighted as of great value to all teachers in this focus group. The crucial role of the headteacher and senior leadership team in establishing a culture that is supportive of teacher-parents is highlighted by Agnes: 'it's led from the top. [...] both [recent headteachers] have been very child-oriented.' The 'family environment' at this particular school means that schools benefit in kind from their teachers, who are willing to give more of themselves outside prescribed hours, as explained by Eleanor, a drama teacher:

If I come in on Sundays - and because of the support that we get for the children, around being a mother, I'll therefore give up my Sundays to do a whole-day rehearsal without you know getting paid. But on the same time I'll bring - and on a Thursday, today, normally I'll be doing a rehearsal, and I'd go home and I'd bring my two children, my youngest ones in with me, and they ride around. [...] And so by welcoming my children in, and that you can go and see these things, I think they get quite a bit back [...] My children are really welcomed.

The same teacher recounts an incident the previous day which she found particularly moving and showed a high degree of empathy and compassion on the part of her headteacher for her role as parent:

My daughter announced last night that she was getting two awards - at a ceremony of excellence - she had ten commendations, she was going to be dancing and singing, and had failed to tell me that she was doing any of this. And [the Head] said to me - you either go or I go. [Laughter] [...] You don't miss things like that. You go. And that was literally last night, because she had failed to tell me. And phoned up this morning and got cover to do that, because that was important - he said.

A deputy head at another school acknowledges that, by allowing teachers to attend extra curricular events for their own children, the school 'gets back in buckets' (Ruth) in terms of loyalty and staff-retention. However, she points out the necessity for a 'degree of trust' that 'can be quite difficult to establish... because it's something you can easily abuse'. In any professional community, there is a potential danger of goodwill being exploited. This is reflected by a focus participant in a third context, who reflects on parents who take time off work when their children are ill:

I mean, it's difficult, cause - I'm just playing devil's advocate here - but you sadly do get some people who will take advantage of good-will as well, and take more time, or even time that isn't even there and say 'oh, it's because of this and that and the other'. But it's like everything, isn't it - you shouldn't penalise the majority who are only taking it for legitimate purposes. Just because one or two people abuse it. But again, I'm sure that's an argument that will be thrown back - how do you know whether their son or daughter's unwell? Cause you don't need to get a sick note if your son or daughter's ill and you're looking after them for a couple of days, do you?

In the same group, the response is a return to the issue of trust: 'Sick dependent; it's a trust thing - trust!'

The issue of the illness of one's own child comes up regularly in both focus group and questionnaire responses, and can be a huge source of strain for teacher-parents, with primary schools imposing a strict 48 hour ban on children return after a vomiting episode and some schools docking pay for teachers who have to take time to be with a sick dependent: 'One woman spoke of her pay being docked for two days off [work] with a child with chickenpox, despite having an otherwise unblemished attendance record' (Chhatwal). Focus group members express their gratitude for a working culture which allows them to be with their sick children when they need to be: 'I've always been told, your kids come first. I've never had a problem

when I've had to go. They've always been very good...' (Sheena). This exchange shows teachers acknowledging that this level of supportiveness is relatively unusual:

Sue: There's that huge understanding that, you know, if you need to go because your child is ill – you have a problem – you just go. And you couldn't want more than that. I don't know anybody, really – well, a few people – but not many people have that luxury in their work – and it's amazing here'

Pete: But not all schools are like that

Sue: No!

Simon: No!

Anna: I mean you're right; people do stay here because it's so kind and caring when it comes to children and all the rest of it. Not in all schools.

In terms of flexibility and empathy for the demands of working-parenthood, the opportunity to work part-time or flexible hours is a significant enabler for many research participants. In the focus groups, 9 of the 33 participants were part-time; all but one were female. Of the questionnaire respondents, 28% reported that they were currently working part-time, with women far more likely to work part-time, at 33%, compared to 9% of men. Teachers with a youngest child between 1 and 3 were most likely to work part-time and senior leaders and headteachers were least likely to do so.

In two of the three schools where focus groups took place, the option to go part-time has been made available to all those who said they had requested this. This is seen by Veena as a reflection of the school's understanding of the pressures of balancing teaching and parenting: 'I'm allowed to work the hours I work. [...] It's understood that I can't offer everything, as much as I know I'd like to. It's been taken on board.'

In schools where the supportive culture is praised by focus group participants, the choice to go part-time during the early phase of parenthood is generally accepted but is seen as no hindrance to long-term career progression:

Genuinely, though – I've not felt – in anyway that, that by being a parent, by being on point eight this year, er, that it's impacted on my career progression or that I'm being seen as – you know – a slacker, whatever, which, my understanding is in other industries – perhaps not education, but other industries, it'd be like, mm, 'part-timer', sort of thing, and [this] school particularly is – is very good for that (Charles).

The option to go part-time at key points in life has a positive impact on teacher morale and loyalty to the institution: 'for us at different times in our lives – I think that makes a big difference, you know – how we always feel able to contribute to the school with our lives now,

and our energy' (Katya). The chances of retaining staff in the longer-term as the result of giving them permission during early parenthood is highlighted by Charles: 'if you've got a teacher you want to keep and you let them go part-time, then they're going to go full time later on – so there's an advantage to the school in terms of retention'.

In summary, role enrichment at meso level is characterised according to the research findings by positive professional relationships and a supportive working culture which reflects an understanding of the day-to-day practicalities of teacher-parents' lives and offers flexible working hours where these are required.

6.3.2.3 Role Enrichment at Macro Level

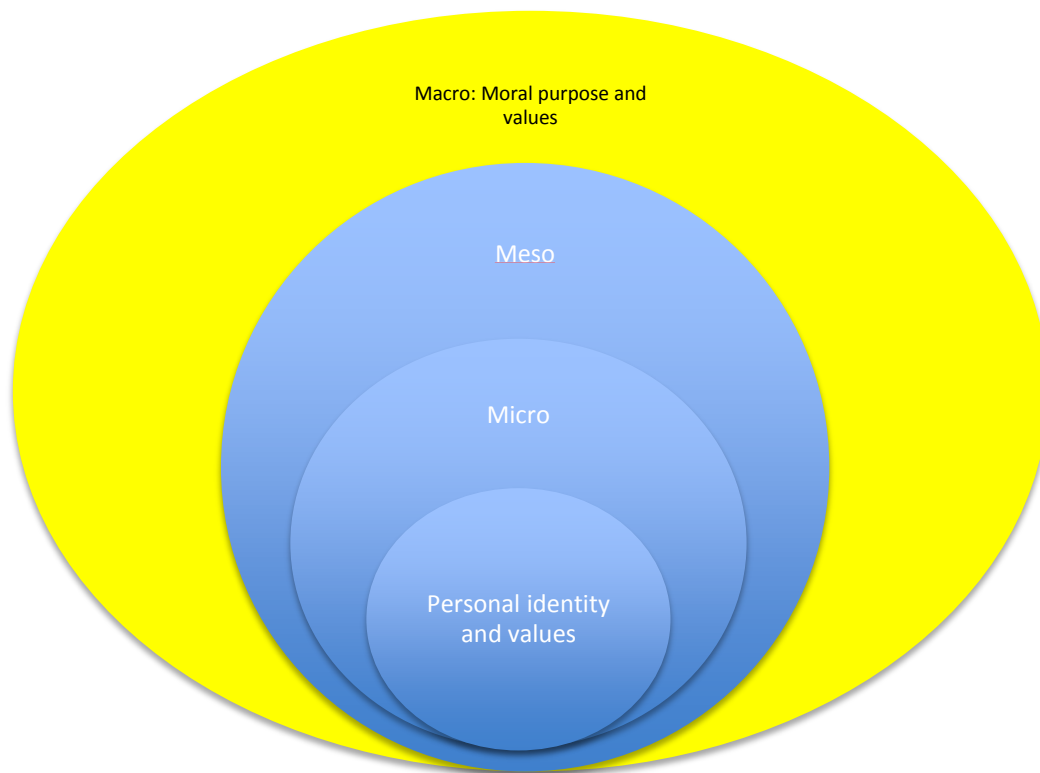


Figure 8: Role enrichment at macro level

Somewhat surprisingly, there is little to no direct reference to government policy from the research participants in the context of role enrichment. Rather, a broader acknowledgement of the possibilities offered by maternity leave, ‘Keeping in Touch’ days and flexible working hours which are made possible by contemporary policies on employment. In terms of how macro factors influence teachers’ identity, it is more a question in the data collected of a set of values greater than the self and the institution for which teachers perceive themselves as standing. This is coupled with an acknowledgement from some research participants that ‘the grass isn’t always greener’ and that being a working parent in non-school-based contexts offers differing, and sometimes more severe, challenges.

A sense of the weight of responsibility held by teachers is a strong theme that comes across in the focus groups and blogs. This is expressed by Kate, senior leader and focus group participant: ‘I genuinely think [parenthood] gives you a moral purpose as a teacher. I think, I really feel strongly about poor practice – erm, I really really do.’ She goes on to explain, regarding her students: ‘This is a kid’s one bite of the cherry. Do you know what I mean? One chance...’ In the

same conversation, Tim, also a senior leader, offers his perspective on teacher-parents and this sense of moral purpose:

Yeah, I think it's easy to – I think it is easy to look at a student sometimes, and he's just another number. Another bit of work that's go to be marked. But I think once you've become a parent, it does – I think I've been in that situation, you're just tired, and marking something, and I've been thinking that'll do. And then you think, well, if – if this was my son or daughter, I'd want it done properly, and it does – I think it does give you an extra bit of emphasis just to make sure the work's finished, and properly.

In his blog, Chivers (2015) echoes the view that, as a parent, he developed an enhanced understanding of the gravity of the role and the importance of the development of every student well before the 'Every Child Matters' government agenda came into play:

It was the progress of each individual child, who held a special place in the school that became the hallmark of the environment. Every child and every person mattered, long before that mantra was used politically.

Since becoming a parent, Findlater (2015) feels a similar increased motivation to offer quality provision to her students: 'Now that I have a child myself, I feel like what I am doing as a job is even more important to get right.' Like Tim, she now views the educational experience through the eyes of her own child. 'What I do know for sure is that all those things I want for my daughter I also want for my students. I hope Tilly is in a school where her teachers feel the same about her.'

This theme recurs throughout the research process. When invited to offer advice to other teacher-parents, Ilham responds:

I would say, to treat [the students] as if they are your own, actually. And to prepare for them as if they – as if they're your own, so – the – you would give them the same lesson as you would give your own child, perhaps. [...] To the standard that you want your own child educated to...

Tim quotes his headteacher mother, 'if your son or daughter was in that room, would you be happy?'... that's the benchmark' and Frances concludes: 'If it's not good enough for your kids, it's not good enough'.

Included within the theme of moral purpose are qualities to which many teachers in the sample aspire: compassion, empathy and kindness. MrSeniorLeader reflects that becoming a parent has helped him to attend to his students with increasing sensitivity as his own children get older:

With regard to students, the older my own children have become, the easier it has been for me to see the student sat in front of me in a different light. The struggles of my own children and the difficulties they have faced in their own education have without doubt, made me much more attentive to the needs of students. I don't mean that I see every student as my own son or daughter, but I am certain that the paternal instincts that I have developed as a result of being a father have helped me to develop as a teacher and when a student approaches me with a concern or a problem, knowing the approach I would take if that child were my own, allows to me face the trial with them in a different way. I suppose that being a father opened my eyes to the challenges that young people face and it helps me to look at them in a slightly different way. Some might call this compassion.

Ilham speaks of the increased importance of kindness in her professional role since becoming a parent and a better understanding of the complex challenges facing some young people:

[Before becoming a parent,] I wouldn't accept anything other than what I wanted from the kids, and then you start to actually see what, you know, you - see what, perhaps, why they haven't got that homework, or why they haven't managed to bring that in. Why their family life, perhaps - and, you know, what background they've got, and it makes you think - it has made me think about, you know - so I've become kinder to the children.

The focus groups build upon the findings in the literature about enhanced relationships with and understanding of parents (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009). Jessica, for example, speaks of how she came to understand the advice of her previous headteacher once she became a parent:

She told us at the end that she wanted us to teach - treat the children like they were our own children - which I didn't really understand at the time - so, I just thought she meant we should be really, really strict. Now [...] I've had children - I now know what she means. And that means, with a lot more kindness. Kindness for the child, and kindness for the parent...

Similarly empathising with the parents of students, Catherine evokes a powerful visual image:

It does change your perspective on students a lot - so I remember before having a child, I looked more to understand students on their level, and now I look at them differently, coming from a parental perspective. And I feel more I'm assessing things through the eyes of their parents; what would their parent what me to do? How would their parent want me to guide them? And I'm so much more empathetic to parents as well, and where they're coming from, and just wanting the best from their children. So I always try to imagine my classroom by having - imagining their parents up on the wall, and they're actually watching, and - what would they be thinking about their student's performance right now, about how they're student's being taught. I never had that two years ago. So that's something that's switched.

In response to this, Grace concurs, agreeing that she too has come to perceive her students as part of a wider family network:

I get that too. Yeah. Definitely seeing the kids through the eyes of the parents. Before I had – um – before I had my child it was these are kids and these are parents. They were almost like separate entities, but now I can really, obviously, directly see the relationship between the kids and their parents, so I now look at kids in a very different way – as a – as a person who belongs to someone else.

Findlater (2015) offers an alternative image of her students as the people who will be influencing and co-existing with her own daughter in the future:

Knowing that my daughter will grow up in a world where the students that I teach will be the ones in charge; the politicians, the journalists, the managers, the teachers and the judges. Knowing that they will shape the world my daughter will live in makes me want to be even better as a teacher and leader.

For Findlater, whose blog is driven by a sense of determination, hope and optimism for the future, it is also a question modelling what it possible to her daughter and thereby creating a sense of limitless possibility.

The meso influences on teacher-parents in this sample, contrary to expectations, were barely related to government policy or working practices, but to values and ideals held dear by teacher-parents and embodied in their effective enactment of the two roles of teacher and parent.

6.3.3 Role conflict

This section concerns itself with the findings from the data collection on role conflict: on the struggles, the barrier and the difficulties faced by teacher-parents in balancing the two roles. The emotions in teaching (Nias, 1996) form a strong thread in this discussion, with guilt and regret emerging as major themes. This section focuses on difficulties reconciling the roles of teacher and parent and experiences of 'identity crisis or legitimation crisis' (Baumeister et al, 1985, p.408) and on the periods when teacher-parents feel 'afraid, frustrated, guilty, anxious and angry' (Nias, 1996, p.297) as they struggle to reconcile the conflicting demands of the two roles.

Though references to role conflict are less frequent than those to role enrichment in the focus groups, where teachers do refer to these, their speech is frequently impassioned – they will tend to speak faster and more loudly on these topics - and occasionally their voices are audibly affected by negative emotion. It is, perhaps unsurprisingly, in the anonymous questionnaires that the most expressions of dissatisfaction and frustration occur, with 57% of respondents either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement, 'I have a healthy work-life balance' and

63% of indicating that they 'regularly feel stressed, depressed or overwhelmed when balancing work and family'.

As with role enrichment, it is frequently the smaller details; the minutiae and practicalities of teachers' daily lives, which accumulate to lead teachers to suffer from stress, anxiety or ultimately to burn-out, can lead to the decision to leave the profession. As with the section above on role enrichment, I have examined the factors which lead to role conflict according the three layers from Bronfenbrenner's model, beginning with micro-influences: family support (or lack thereof) and close relationships. I then go on to examine the macro-influences on role conflict: unsupportive working cultures and conflict in the workplace, before examining the factors at meso level which impact negatively on teacher-parents: negative media representation, government attitudes and policies and the performativity agenda. Once again, a diagram at the beginning of each section illustrates the main themes to be discussed.

6.3.3.1 Role Conflict at Micro Level

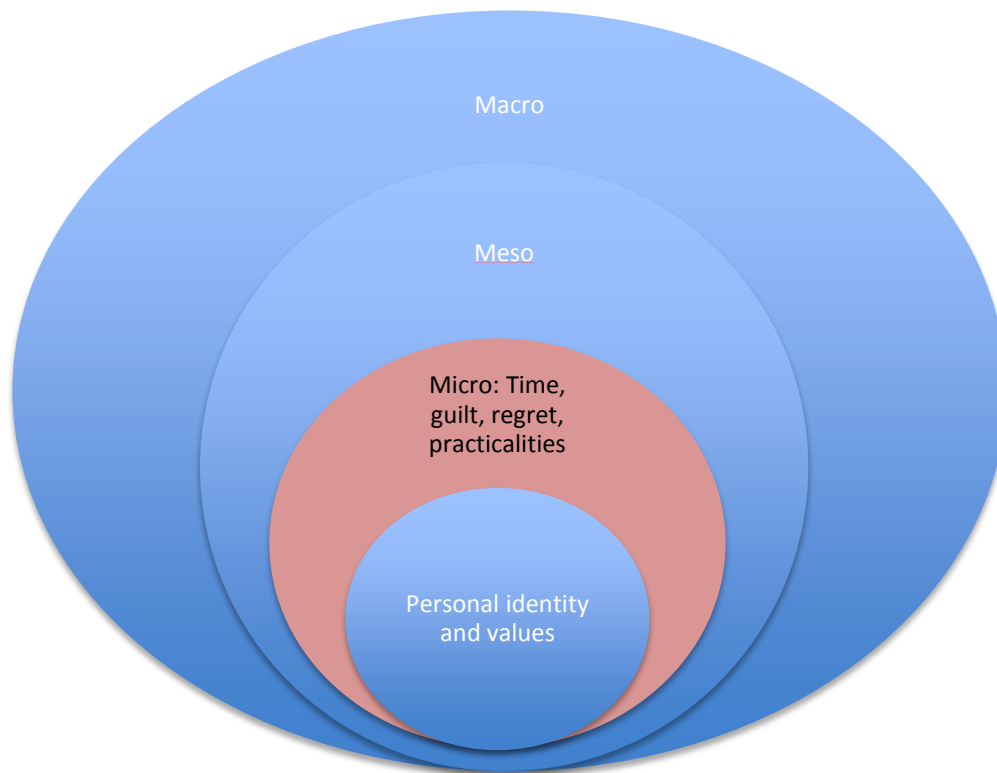


Figure 9: Role conflict at micro level

The data from the questionnaire is quite striking when it comes to examining the factors which cause role conflict at micro level, with 71% of respondents indicating that they regularly experience feelings of guilt that they are neglecting their duties at home and 63% they 'regularly feel stressed, depressed or overwhelmed when balancing work and family'. In addition, 20% of respondents identify the use of alcohol or nicotine to wind-down as a factor which helps them balance work and family commitments, which points to an issue well worthy of future study.

Time – its preciousness and its rapid passing – are dominant themes for the research participants, with the word 'time' itself accounting for a significant 2.57% of all written and spoken responses to the research - almost double that of the next most frequent word, 'school'. Several focus group members make reference to the truism that time passes so fast and that teacher-parents must value it. 'Enjoy every moment', advises a mother to a two-year-old, and, 'you just can't get it back... you do regret the things you can't get back', warns Sheena. 'Everyone tells you it – and you don't listen - but it's true. Time goes so quickly', says Ruth. Thinking back over his teenage son's early childhood, Rod reflects on 'time flying by' and asks himself: 'Could I

have used some of the time better? I would say yes, so trying to make [...] time in the evenings, after work [for family].’

Abdullah’s frequent repetition of the words ‘difficult’ and ‘hard’ reveal the challenging of making enough time for both work and family responsibilities:

I think it’s the time is the most important thing - that you haven’t got time. I mean, you know, I’m going to be very honest here, but I find it very difficult. Very hard. [...] You know, it’s just very, very hard. As soon as I get home, I have to look after my children, you know, sit down and me teach them – do that, do that. Then it gets dark, then they get to sleep, and – you know, just very hard. Very hard. The time. Just to do things at home. Very difficult. Even marking. I find it very hard. It’s very hard, yeah.

The scarcity of time can mean that, for some teacher-parents, there is an overwhelming sense that they ‘can’t win’ and that guilt is inevitable: ‘One man commented: “It’s a question of balancing guilt (letting family down v letting children at school down) as I allocate my time”’ (Chhatwal, 2015).

To be separated from a young child goes against a basic biological imperative, and two mothers describe the genuine anguish this can cause:

Close to a year ago now, I stood watching my youngest sleep in his cot with tears rolling down my face, feeling the anguish many parents feel at being separated from their little ones (Martindale, 2015).

Despite family support, Sue finds it virtually unbearable to leave her young child:

My Mum, bless her [...], she retired, she retired just at the time I had my first child, and she stepped in and looked after her for me, because I didn’t want to leave her. I didn’t want to leave her with anyone else. I just wanted to be with her. I couldn’t bear the thought of going to school. When I first started teaching after maternity leave, I used to cry.

In both cases, the description of the physical act of weeping is associated with these recollections, underlining the poignancy of the struggle experienced by parents of young children who choose to – or must – go out to work.

As teacher-parents’ own children get older, feelings of guilt and regret appear to become, if anything, more frequent. Two focus group participants point out that their own children appear to need their parents more as teenagers: ‘Emotionally, yes, they do need you more. And you

need to be there more when they're teenagers' (Ilham). This challenges several participants' views that they will have the opportunity to build up their careers as their children get older.

For SecretTeacher (2015), not being able to support her children in extra-curricular activities was one of the factors which made the working culture 'unworkable' for her, as a mother:

They don't complain any more when I miss their school events, they just get a disappointed look on their faces. I feel I am shortchanging them. I am tired of giving excuses and I'm sure they are tired of hearing them.

The conflicting desires to be both fulfilling professional duties and supporting one's own children are echoed by Veena:

It's hard prioritising that, I find, when, for example, I've got the kids' sports days coming up, and I know it's great that – that, at the age they are, at six and four, they want both their Mummy and Daddy there. Already Daddy's not going to be there because he's away – er – which means I've got to take two days out of work, and that I find really hard, because it's... it's so hard to set your cover work then make sure that that cover work's been done. How do you go about then marking it... Any time off because of your own children – it just creates this whole backlog. And it's so frustrating.

Again, her visible frustration – she frowns as she speaks and her voice is rapid and animated – is the result of a sense that she is in a 'no win' situation. This feeling is familiar to parents who have needed or hoped to take time off due to their child's illness or medical requirements. For Sue, the guilt at missing a crucial medical appointment for her daughter is intense. She speaks emotionally and appears to be fighting off a desire to weep:

...and she's still yet to have this appointment... because we had to re-book it and you have to wait months and months, and... and it's just horrible. And I felt very resentful. But it was stupid – I made – I made the wrong decision - and I have never forgiven myself.

The pressure of being pulled in two directions at once – of being needed as a parent at the same time as needing to be a professional – is a central cause of frustration and unhappiness for teacher-parents, and yet many give in to the 'louder voices' (Keith) which demand they work longer hours and fulfil more duties at a cost to their family lives.

Tomsett, in his blog, 'This much I know about why putting your family first matters' writes of his irritation with his son for taking him away from his professional duties:

I didn't mean to be a misery, but I know I was. I would take Joe to football on a Sunday morning when he played for the Under 9s knowing I had a Technology College bid to

write. I would be moody when the kick off was delayed. I would be mad with him when he didn't try. I felt like he was wasting my time, time when I could have been working.

Teaching is characterised by a potentially endless list of 'things to do' which appear to intensify as teachers take on more responsibility and can become a source of resentment and conflict within the family:

Headships are all consuming things; you're a headteacher every minute of every day. And my designation became Joe's vehicle for abuse. 'Stop being a headteacher' he would mutter with no attempt to conceal his contempt for me (Tomsett , 2014).

Three teacher-parents in the focus groups speak directly of being 'grumpy', 'cross' and 'snappy' with their own children in the evenings after a day at work and having to make a conscious decision not to 'take it out on them'. The emotionally demanding nature of the job is highlighted regularly by research participants. For Rod, as a head of year, this is particularly pertinent:

It's very emotional role in terms of getting involved with children and their backgrounds and their families, and that can be quite draining, when you go home and... again it comes to the switching off point.

This can mean that 'drawing a line' (Ray) between work and home is not always as straightforward as it might appear. Both teaching and parenthood have the potential to make huge emotional demands on an individual and there can be sense of being pulled in opposing directions. The near-constant communication means there is perpetual noise, with few moments for respite, quiet or time for the self and the roles of teacher and parent existing to the exclusion of any time to 'be yourself': 'I'd feel squeezed into the corner of my own life, as if I didn't really exist as a human', says Keith of the period when his children were younger. Extra or unexpected challenges, when they arise at home, can push teachers to their emotional limits, as described here by Frances:

And I'd go home – and my husband found it so difficult to deal with our children when they were teenagers – he's an amazing Dad with young ones, but when they hit teenager years, he just found it so difficult – and I would go home sometimes to World War Two – and have to – you know, intervene, mediate and sit down – calm them down, and dur-dur-dur-dur, and it would be like, oh dear Lord, and you just felt it was like, those kinds of skills you were using all day – and at home as well... I found that I was just emotionally shattered.

For Louisa, who earlier in the session spoke calmly and positively about her active decision to pursue her career, the topic of guilt leads to a rather emotional admission about her current struggle to balance the two roles and the fact that her own children have become accustomed to seeing her busy and are therefore less inclined to ask for her help:

I'm finding that the work-life balance is huge issue at the moment. Especially when roles in school are so different – I've taken on more responsibility – and you come home quite stressed, and I've still got in the back of my head all the stuff that I haven't read, marking books, planning for the next day. But the priority is, your children come home, they have homework, and you, sort of – I feel like I'm in a situation where I have to rush it through, not really giving it a hundred percent of my attention, because I'm too busy thinking about what I have to do. Sometimes I have to just stop, and it's really difficult. [...] And sometimes I feel so bad that they see me doing work and they just don't ask, can you help me? Cause they know I'm busy. And I'm like, no no, I'll put that away. What do you want me to do? And, you know, I feel sometimes quite guilty in that respect... You know, I feel I could give them so much more. But you feel, with work-life balance and your responsibilities in school, sometimes I haven't got that 100% attention that potentially I'd like to give them. I don't know how you guys feel about it.

Louisa's final appeal elicits the empathy she appears to be seeking, with other members of the group sharing similar experiences of guilt and regret. With each focus group, these expressions of vulnerability lead to murmurs of empathy and sympathy, people moving forward to listen more closely, each of which indicate a growing sense of camaraderie in the group.

As with role enrichment, detail and practicalities are absolutely key to the wellbeing and effectiveness of the teacher-parent, and there are a number of factors, existing in isolation or in combinations, which can make life for the teacher-parent extremely challenging.

In one focus group, those lucky enough to have support networks they depend on to pursue their careers – grandparents or siblings who are willing to offer childcare – were countered by voices of teachers who simply do not have that luxury:

Sylvie: it's the network. Personally, Grandma and Grandpa are in Paris...

Richard: We have the same issue

Sylvie: But I think the network also has an impact on whether you make a choice to pursue the career or not.

Veena: I'm restricted in that way. We've made some difficult choices. My husband... is not as flexible.

For the teachers without an extended network of family support, unexpected late working hours, child illnesses and marking of exam papers are examples of duties they have to negotiate alone or with their partner and choices are limited. Whilst the importance of a supportive partner has been emphasised by this research, it is also important to note that, by choice or by chance, 18% of UK teacher-parents are not married, in a civil partnership, or cohabiting (ONS, April-June 2015).

Paid childcare includes an element of inflexibility which is a genuine challenge for some teachers. Agnes's detailed, and somewhat breathless, description of the implications of this for her family reveals the stress this causes her on a regular basis:

There is a big shortage of morning care. Definitely. My other half isn't a teacher, fortunately, which makes life a bit easier for us, because he negotiated with his employers that he doesn't start work till ten o'clock. So he drops [our daughter] every morning, except the day I'm off. And that - he works till six-thirty - so then I have to make sure that I'm the one that can pick her up. But the school days are too similar to be able to do any of those without assistance from somebody else, unless ... and tomorrow morning I'm coming in late because he's not around to drop her off, and I've got to drop her off, and then it's her sports day anyway and I've got Period One off to go to her sports day. So that kind of worked together as one thing. But it is a huge dilemma. The holidays work, but the times of day do not work when you're a parent of young children.

Ray echoes Agnes's concerns in his response:

There is a logistical issue within education as well, which is that work starts at the same time as children need to be dropped off to school, so primary age children who are going to - if you have children you are in a direct conflict with your own employer, permanently, unless you undertake to get somebody else to drop them off. And while that may not seem like the biggest deal in the world, and an entirely financial arrangement, actually - I don't think so. I think starting the day right is quite important to children, and there isn't flexibility. I know we've got great holidays, but we have no flexibility in the working day...

Not only can childcare be inflexible, it can also be extremely expensive. The concerns of research participants directly reflect the Daycare Trust findings quoted in Chapter 4, which cite British childcare costs as the highest in Europe (Hunt, 2002). Childcare costs are cited as a source of stress by participants in all three forums, and there are several explicit references to 'paying the mortgage'. In the questionnaire, a striking 65% of respondents either agreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: 'I worry about the family finances'. Foster's blog of the same title: 'Why I pay to teach' (2015) describes a situation where, after the birth of her second child, the cost of continuing to work for three days a week meant losing several hundred pounds a month.

The single biggest challenge, cited by 73% of questionnaire respondents, when balancing work and family was 'tiredness and lack of sleep'. This is reflected in the focus groups and the blogs by teacher-parents of young children or those reflecting back on the early years of parenthood: 'It's very rare that, you know, I do get a full night's sleep', says Peter, father to two children under three. In his blog, MrSeniorLeader recalls the 3 a.m. wake-up call with his first child and identifies this as a key experience in building the qualities needed to be an effective teacher and senior leader:

The physical exhaustion of bottles at 3am and knowing the alarm would be buzzing three hours later still haunts me to this day, but the character that this built in me has stayed with me until this day. Resilience is a real buzzword in education today, but the resilience needed to be a teacher cannot be underestimated. Fatherhood undoubtedly instilled this in me and those 'middle-of-the-night' visits to the kettle were a significant part of that.

In the questionnaire, household chores and responsibilities are cited by 67% as a significant challenge, and the lack of physical exercise is identified by over a third of respondents. Both of these factors point to time being squeezed and non-essential tasks being overlooked in favour of greater priorities.

In summary, at micro level, the most significant sources of role conflict are the negative emotions which accompany the balancing of teaching and parenthood: guilt, regret and frustration. Practical and logistical challenges contribute directly to these. In the next chapter, I will make some recommendations, based on the data collected, as to how some of these issues might be tackled.

6.3.3.2 Role Conflict at Meso Level

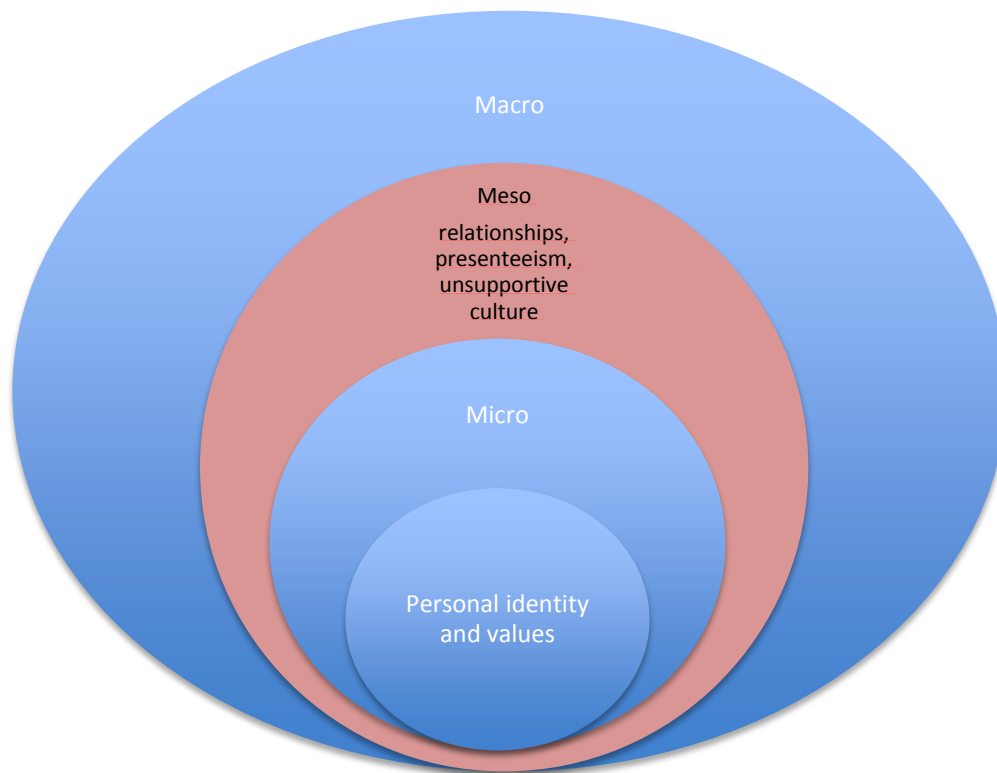


Figure 10: Role conflict at meso level

The culture and working practices of the individual institution have a huge impact on the wellbeing, effectiveness and career aspirations of teacher-parents. Where many teacher-parents in the study consider themselves fortunate to work in supportive environments, some reflect on more negative experiences. Others find that the situations they are in are causing them a huge amount of stress and frustration; it is noteworthy though unsurprising that no focus group member spoke in those terms of their current school. From Secret Teacher, a regular Guardian Feature which allows teachers to anonymously air their views (predominantly on elements of the job which annoy or frustrate them), there is the unambiguously titled article: 'The Working Culture in Teaching is Impossible for Mums' (2015). The article's author displays distinctive signs of 'burnout', as explored in Chapter 3. There are some key points highlighted in the article which are reflected in other areas of the data collection and are well worth exploring. This particular anonymous teacher, significantly, has decided, as a result of 'this ridiculous working culture' to leave teaching altogether – joining the two fifths of teachers who leave teaching in the first five years (SecretTeacher, 2015). This is an area well worthy of future exploration, but for the purposes of this study, it is necessary to narrow the focus to teacher-parents and the barriers and conflicts they face at an institutional level.

Where the vast majority of teachers cite an improvement in relationships with students since becoming a parent, there is an issue around personal safety and security highlighted by one focus group participant, who was threatened, during pregnancy, with violence by a student. This moment remains in her mind as highlighting an acute instinct to protect her unborn child.

For others, sensitive interactions with parents, particularly around the safety and security of their children, can be very difficult. Part of the duty of care of a teacher is to identify and report any concerns about student welfare, but for one research participant, passing judgement on other parents can be deeply uncomfortable, as described by Veena, a former head of year:

I think it's hard when you have to involve external agencies. The mother in you wants to give the parent a second chance, but you know something's not right – and it is so hard to make that decision – that the welfare of these children comes first. But we all have days where we're probably not the best parent, so...

Relationships with colleagues, and particularly with the senior management and the headteacher, are particularly significant for teacher-parents. These relationships combine to create a working culture which, if perceived to be unsupportive, can have a direct and detrimental effect on the wellbeing of teacher-parents. It is important for teacher-parents to perceive that the headteacher has empathy for their dual role, and there is a perception that this is not always the case:

I know of schools where headteachers are very difficult, because they might not have children themselves, or because they don't feel that your family should impinge upon your work... (Ray).

This can result in a lack of flexibility when it comes to teacher-parents hoping to support their own children during the school day:

I remember a lot of barriers being put up with people who did have children for things like 'No, you can't go and see your child's final school assembly, it's in school time, you can't then ...' You know, things like that. Which you know, I see a massive difference. And that was just lack of empathy because they were people who didn't have children - or if they did they were long-since grown up and they'd kind of forgotten what it was all about.

A particularly shocking anecdote on lack of supportiveness in a previous school comes from Eleanor:

I used to work at a school that didn't have [a supportive culture] at all. I actually had to carry on teaching, having a miscarriage. And it wasn't a complete miscarriage and the baby was still alive at that point, and I had to carry on. And because I'd been at the

school fete the day before, that was why I wasn't allowed the Monday off, because she'd seen me at the school fete and she said 'If you're coming in to school on your day off, it doesn't matter if you're having a miscarriage. You will come in.' And I was also told - and it's a different thing - but she broke the law, heftily, cause she wouldn't let me go to my antenatal classes, and in the end she agreed that I could go to two if I wrote her 130 reports. So having been the other - so that was my first child. So I had to go into ... well, you know, after your first one, you don't need them, the antenatal classes. But that was so ... Having seen the two sides of it ...

As Eleanor points out, there is a big question mark over the legality of these acts or at least whether they fall within the duty of care that schools are required to show their staff, but this story points to a sharp contrast between working cultures in different institutions, and one that will be further explored in the following chapter.

Working hours are cited repeatedly as a cause of role conflict. Findings from the questionnaire show that more than half of teacher-parents claiming to work between 11 and 20 hours a week outside the hours of 8.30 to 3.30; this averages out to between 2 and 4 hours per day and is broadly the same for men and women. Strikingly, 12% of teachers (including 20% of SLT and 38% of headteachers) claim that they work more than 25 hours per week outside prescribed school hours. The strain of long working hours is reflected in the ONS data (April-June 2015), which indicates that 29% of teacher-parents surveyed would prefer fewer working hours.

The hours required to fulfil the role, particularly at management level, can be unpredictable and this can have a negative impact on home life, as Keith describes:

It's not a job you can just drop, you know. There are times when I've ended up getting home late, much, much later than I said I was gonna do. And they're like 'I thought you were coming back at ...' to do that. And I'm like, well, this came up - I had to deal with it. Because it's such a person job, when somebody comes to see you, you can't just say - they might be upset or they might have an issue - 'Yeah, I'm off now. Forget it.' That's not the way I operate. And that's part of being a teacher I think. You know, a parent phones you up just as you're leaving and you need to deal with something, or ... So it can be very unpredictable as well.

Eleanor paints a vivid picture of attempting to undertake professional tasks during the night with a young baby:

Well, you've got marking, I find as well - that needs to be done, and then a baby that will only have me in the middle of the night [for] breastfeeding. So I'll be sitting at the dining room table and she'll wake up, and you know there is no point [my husband] going up to her, because he won't settle her and I'll just sit there for half an hour listening to her crying, so I need to go up there, settle her - she will go down in about ten minutes - and then ... and then she might wake up in the middle of the night ... and you know ... and I

think 'Don't think I've got this marking' cause obviously I feed her still and I think that goes through into her - the stress - she knows. As soon as I think 'I need to be downstairs, she will not go to sleep.' But then it's the other way ... the effects on ... and if you've got those reports to write, you're guaranteed that will be the night that she won't wake up. No seriously, I got an hour - I've got to do six reports in that hour otherwise it's not gonna happen - and it just, there's just ... yeah ...

Eleanor's concern that her stress is impacting negatively on her child is combined with a real sense that she simply won't get the required tasks completed. Once again, this highlights a frustrating 'no-win' situation where teacher-parents feel they are unable to fulfil either role as well as they would wish.

Presenteeism – the pressure to be seen working very long hours – is a strong theme in the education sector at present and has been highlighted in the review of the literature in Chapter 3 (Day, 2012). The impact of the performativity agenda and the associated pressure to be seen working increasingly long hours is a significant theme for the teacher-parents of this study. Whilst the perceived pressures vary from school to school, most of the teacher-parents interviewed cite this as a key feature of role-conflict. Whilst appearing confident in his pragmatic decision to 'say no' more often, Simon, a senior leader, admits that he still 'feels guilty' about not being able to support as many extra curricular events at his place of work. Agnes admits that she 'struggles' as the result of being 'pulled back into work more often than [she] would wish' and Kay states simply: 'I would like to spend more time with my daughter. And I don't – not out of choice, but such is the demand of the job'.

The emotive, violent language used by two contributors is particularly powerful: MrSeniorLeader asks himself, 'does the school get more than its pound of flesh?' whilst SecretTeacher writes of being 'robbed' of 'valuable family time'. This use of language shows resentment and provides, in both cases, a metaphor for the struggle for time and focus between home and school.

It would appear from the study that presenteeism is more prevalent the more senior a teacher becomes, and for Chhatwal, it is of particular concern at senior leadership level:

In too many schools SLT are expected to be the first to arrive in the morning and the last to leave in the (late or very late) evening. And this is the case regardless of what they actually achieve. Yet surely staff should be judged on outcomes, not the hours they put in?

Yet mainscale teachers too allude to feeling 'judged' if they leave before their colleagues.

Abdullah speaks of leaving at 3.30 to support his wife and young children and Simon, a senior

leader in the same room, jokes, 'yes, I see you sneaking out of that gate early!'. The humour reveals empathy but also points to a genuine culture where teachers are indeed judged according to the hours they put in. SecretTeacher, somewhat bitterly, cites another example of this:

I left at 5.30pm one day to pick up my son from school because my husband was away and my mum was poorly. I had already spent hours planning lessons that I knew were good, but the fact that I wasn't floating around the corridors until midnight just wasn't acceptable. Comments were made. "Oh, you're leaving early," one colleague said. In the staff meeting the next morning, praise was showered on those who had worked late the night before.

As with more supportive and flexible working cultures, it is clear from this anecdote that the senior leadership team sets the tone for practices that are acceptable and praiseworthy and those deserving of disapproval or condemnation.

Meetings are a particular source of dissatisfaction for focus group participants particularly 'snap meetings' – those called at short notice – and 'waffly meetings' – those which go on for longer than they might. Anna expresses her frustration about calendared meetings:

And even department meetings – you know- you could have said what you needed to say in about five minutes, and it just goes round and round and round, and all I'm doing is looking at the clock, going right, well, I don't care. I'm leaving at twenty past – so I'm the same.

The timing of governors' meetings, which senior leaders and subject leaders are expected to attend with varying degrees of regularity, are a source of frustration for Kate:

They all happen at six. Why? I mean, I've seen this happen as well, with other academies – they have a governor day each half term, so all the governors' meetings are held during a working day. You open the diary eighteen-months in advance – you've got people who work in industry. Put them in their diary, take it off, and if they want to go and watch schools, they can. Why can't that happen?

For teachers fortunate enough to have their requests to go part-time for family reasons granted, this picture is not always a positive one. Charles, part-time himself, advises others:

There's no point in going part-time... I mean, to clarify it. I mean, I do love my day off with [my daughter], and this term, now, it's nice. So tomorrow is my day off, and I'm looking forward to having a day off. But as I'm sure everyone who's gone part-time knows, during Christmas and Easter terms, that – I mean you have all these great ideas about how to spend the time – right, we're going to do this, spend quality time. Ultimately the – what I've found is that it's very difficult to avoid having marking, planning, whatever else, filling up some if not all of that extra day that you have, and so

that idea of -, you know, you're basically – you're out of a day's pay, and – we all know that the work fills to – expands to fill the gap that it has, and so – you know... you're not benefiting from it.

Charles expresses a frustration felt by other part-time teachers that the amount of work simply grows to fill the time available; that he is essentially doing a full-time job and being paid less than he was previously. This reflects the findings by Cinamon et al, discussed in Chapter 4, who found that flexible working hours were associated with work-family conflict (2007, p.258).

Where Foster (2015) 'pays to teach', Agnes acknowledges that her decision to go down to four days a week is the reason she is no longer a head of department. Eleanor has held onto her head of department role despite being part-time, but reflects that she is effectively doing a full-time job on 80% of the salary:

I am still head of department, I've remained head of department, two departments, and you get paid pro-rata. Now I don't get to 80% of some head of department will go, Right, somebody else can do the other 20, cause I'm stopping now. I still do 100% of that job. Perhaps I'm not here for 20% to deal with - if a child gets sent out of the room - but I don't get to the end of, you know ... If I could do review, or sorting out my budget, I don't get to 80% and go, Who's going to do the extra? I'm not getting paid for it, so off you go and somebody do it. And that is difficult. That is really hard. And is there somebody I could hand over to? No. There isn't at the moment.

In response, Ray reflects on his wife's experience, also a former part-time middle leader:

She was like head of careers, head of PSHE, and again I know she feels the amount of time and effort she's put into those jobs - they're not part-time jobs. You can't sort of, like you say, oh well that's my responsibility, and therefore I'll cut off at that point. You can't do it. And again I agree with you ... I don't know how you'd make it into school policy, I don't know that it's possible.

Here, Ray acknowledges that there is no obvious or simple solution to the issue at whole-school level. The situation for the management of schools when considering part-time roles is similarly complex. Ruth, a deputy head, finds herself in the unusual position of explaining this to a group of teacher-parents, three of whom are currently part-time. Ruth speaks slowly, apparently choosing her words carefully – this is clearly a sensitive issue and the group is unusually quiet and attentive to her words:

Emma [researcher]: I know it causes all sorts of nightmares, for – for people organising things, but –

Ruth: I don't think – I don't think that's so much the downside, I think that the knock-on is for the children – um – where we've got

Charles: Shared groups

Ruth: Yeah – and you get split classes, and I’m not sure how well we take all of that into account when we’re making decisions, cause – cause we do want to do the best for the staff, and I... you know – I’m not sure you can always see the impact. Cause actually, one child could have all of us as teachers

Grace: Mmm

Ruth: And, you know, if – if everybody was part time, they could get split classes in every subject

Charles: Mmm

Ruth: That would be a nightmare, and I think probably there’s – if we want to kind of continue with this, which I think we would do, I think there’s a mapping exercise to do about which teachers go with which classes and

Charles: Mmm

Ruth: To make sure that the impact of that part-timeness isn’t, um...

As senior leaders are aware, the timetabling and management of part-time staff can be extremely complex, and to ensure fairness and transparency for teachers as well as ensuring the students receive the best possible provision is no simple task.

Of all the factors which impact on teacher-parent identity, wellbeing and aspirations, the analysis of role conflict at meso level yields the most detailed and significant findings. Relationships, school culture and practicalities are all areas over which both school leadership and the individual teacher potentially have some control. A discussion of how these challenges might be broached will be undertaken in the following chapter.

6.3.3.3 Role Conflict at Macro Level

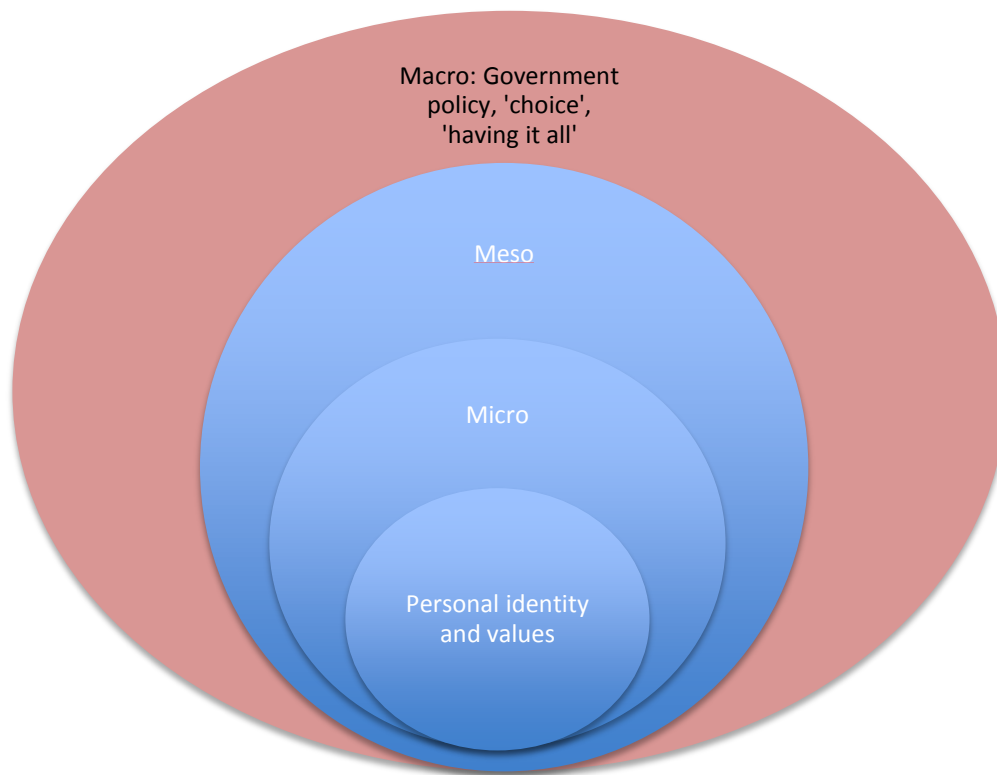


Figure 11: Role conflict at macro level

Questionnaire respondents were asked to identify what changes could be made at national level of improve the wellbeing and performance of teachers. There were 26 references to the excessive pressures of Ofsted, with some participants acknowledging the need for an inspectorate but questioning its excessively punitive approach and others calling for it to be abolished. There were a further 8 references to the removal of Gove, Education Secretary at the time of the questionnaire: 'this would certainly improve morale', said one respondent, with others using rather less restrained language, 'idiot Gove' being one publishable example. A striking 117 questionnaire respondents made direct reference to a need for greater flexibility; included in these suggestions were more flexible working hours and a more flexible attitude to family commitments from the headteacher and senior leadership team. There are a further 8 references to a need to stem the flow of negative publicity about teachers from the media. Childcare and parental leave are also raised as key issues in need of improvement with 218 references to the former and 33 references to the latter. Tax relief and subsidy of childcare costs are suggested, as are shared parental leave between mothers and fathers.

As with role enrichment, there are few direct references to government policy from teachers in focus groups; the discussions are focused far more on the individual and the institution, but Keith highlights a lack of empathy, which mirrors the frustrations faced by many some teachers when discussing school leaders:

That's what really annoys me about the way the government - we're such an easy target, but nobody ever says what we actually do on a day-to-day basis, and the pressures that we face. And, you know, the strain it can put on your family life. And I know other people have the same pressure, you know, have similar pressures, but like Laura was saying - yep, we have the long holidays, but it's that inflexibility. From that time till that time, you are fixed in...

Agnes responds, 'You're a spoke and there's nothing you can do.'

The frustration in these comments arises from a sense of disempowerment and lack of a voice for teachers as far as the government – and sometimes the media – are concerned.

The issue of parental leave is also raised by focus group participants. Pete felt that he was dissuaded from taking the full two weeks he was entitled to, and was, in addition, frustrated by the financial impact:

I think that paternity pay is an issue as well, with – um – I know when, in my previous school, we had [our son]. And there was a lot of pressure to not take two weeks off. And in fact there was also pressure to come in for Year 6 open day and what have you. Um. You know. So. I didn't get paid. I was on statutory paternity pay, so that was a real big hit as well, so I earned less than half my salary in September.

Mirroring the values aspired to by teacher parents when examining role enrichment, there is a set of 'ideals' or 'expectations' to which some teacher-parents apparently feel pressure to adhere. Of direct relevance to this study was a Twitter discussion and a blog on the subject of 'having it all' which was linked to the #womened discussion group for women in education. This is closely linked to the concept of 'choice'.

For Findlater, to be able to pursue a full-time career in school leadership and be a working mother is a credible proposition as well as being an ideal to which she passionately aspires. Yet for other teacher-parents, particularly for women, there is a perception that 'women in particular judge each other too harshly' (questionnaire respondent).

Compromise and pragmatism in each unique situation, for a number of research contributors, are absolutely key. Kay reflects that, since becoming a parent, it is no longer a question of what she alone wants or aspires to, but of considering the situation more holistically: 'I guess we all have to make tough decisions, because it's not just a decision based on how we feel, but it's about our children and our family'. For Eleanor, it is a questioning of managing expectations:

Be prepared to have no life at all. And then you'll be pleasantly surprised because you do have a little bit of life. And another things that's good ... there are three things in life - there's career, family and social life. When your children are young, you can have two. You can't have all three, so choose the two ... and you can have those. Career and social life. Career and a family. Social life and a family, but you can't have them all.

Here, Eleanor issues a direct challenge to the theme of 'having it all'. This is, in her view, simply impossible. This is echoed by Sheena: 'I think it's really hard for a woman to have it all. I don't think you can have it all.'

For others too, 'making it work' as a parent and teacher means sacrificing the 'having it all' ideal and resisting perceived societal pressures to either conform to or to resist traditional gender roles. An experienced teacher and respected educational author, Cowley advises: 'I don't think it's possible for women or men to 'have it all'. In fact, I don't think it's a good idea for women or men to aim to "have it all"' (2015).

Eleanor goes on to voice her support for women who actively wish to pursue traditional gender roles:

[A colleague] who works here is always saying, 'Those bitches that burned their bras in the sixties! I don't wanna have to work.' She wants to be a stay-at-home mum. And we don't have that choice. If you're an educated woman, unless you marry very well, as you know Mr Darcy would say - unless you marry very well, you don't have the choice to stay at home. Your choice is - you've either got to be somebody that's on the benefit wheel, or you've got to marry someone that's rich enough to keep you in the manner to which ... But you can't.

The concept of 'choice' is essentially anomalous for many people. Those without a close family network may not have the 'choice' to pursue senior leadership positions because they cannot guarantee being able to put in the long hours required. Those who are single parents may well not have a choice as to whether the work or not, as was the case for Sue: 'I started out as a single parent with my first child... and, I had to work. I didn't have a choice. But I really, desperately, wanted to stay at home with her [...] but I couldn't.' Eleanor admits that her domestic situation

and the need for more financial security was her primary motivation for becoming a head of department:

I became head of department, and it was like I said earlier - when I was a single mother, because I had nothing, and I couldn't pay the mortgage - and I had a bit of shit of an ex-husband [laughter] ... And I couldn't afford ... I had this much going out and I couldn't, and I'd look at him and I'd say 'I can't afford to bring the children up' and he was like, 'So?' Literally. 'So?' So that was when I made the decision to become a head of department, because that was a way of getting money into... that was out of necessity.

Wilson (2015), in her blog entitled, 'Having it All, or The Choices we Make' took the opportunity to ask a selection of female headteachers about how they 'balance professional ambition and expectations, with family commitments' and found that common answers included:

1. They earn enough as a couple to employ home help and additional childcare support
2. They live close enough to family who support them with the childcare
3. She earns more than he does and they have agreed that she will develop her career, with his support in running the home

Wilson goes on to ask, 'what if you do not have the above options?' This underlines the fact that choice is a luxury enjoyed by certain teacher-parents with clear support networks and financial stability. She also reflects on one of the central contradictions of 'netnography':

the unheard voices: those who are balancing effectively – do they have time to share their stories? 'the irony is, do all of these potential role models have the time to tweet and blog about their experiences? Or are they up to their eyes in responsibilities, at school and at home?'

'We don't need to 'have it all', writes Cowley (2014), 'but we do need to decide what it is that we truly want to have.' This necessitates clear communication, compromise and teamwork, echoing the key elements of role enrichment at micro level. This also entails letting go of perfectionism and distant ideals, as expressed by a recently appointed headteacher and mother to young children, in a comment under Cowley's blog:

Part of the issue stems from a culture that saturates us with ubiquitous images of success. I don't have a perfect, flawless work or family life. My in-tray and washing are always need of extra attention; I'm not a yummy mummy or a super hero. *steps off of soap box*

It would appear from the data that women in particular are inclined to put pressure on themselves to live up to an ideal. This tends to be comprised of an amalgamation of pressures

from within – the scourge of perfectionism and the perceived societal pressure to ‘have it all’. Martindale reflects on how she fell into this trap:

I created a persona for myself. A role I put on in the morning of a working mum that her children would be proud of and hopefully inspire to have their own career goals in the future. What did this look like? Someone who said yes to opportunities more often than not and looked at problems as challenges. It’s true to say I was feeling like a million grains of sand had slipped through my fingers during the time that I was off. A race had started in my absence. Could I ever catch up?

In summary, the pressures and challenges on teacher-parents at macro level include perceived frustration at being misunderstood and disrespected by government and media, but more significantly, the tendency to feel pressured to be perfect in every element of both roles of teacher and parent. As Martindale suggests, ‘Perhaps if we stop striving for perfect and flawless, we would all be happier and more fulfilled?’ However, Agnes offers another perspective, suggesting the fact that the struggle (to which she herself admits) is part of the process but that this need not be to the exclusion of options and possibilities. She offers the following advice: ‘Just that everything is possible. You can do it. But you will like times, and just talk to people when you feel like you can’t do it. Because you will feel like that.’

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analysed the data provided through focus groups, questionnaire and online blogs and articles in order to identify the key features which influence the identity, wellbeing, and career aspirations of teacher-parents. As an iterative analytical exercise, the themes which dominated were not exclusively those that might have been expected. Where gender predictably played a big role, a deeper analysis of the issues revealed a more complex picture underlying the ongoing traditional division of gender roles, with both men and women experiencing emotions intensely and having to make sometimes difficult compromises and decisions. The issue of workload and the need for the extremely tricky balance that is ‘ruthless compartmentalisation’ of work and home highlights an issue of choice and control. In the next chapter, I will attempt to provide a framework of suggestions as to how the lives of teacher-parents can be improved at individual, institutional and national level, by identifying the factors over which we can, potentially, assert control and suggesting what form actions might take. The focus will not be on providing ‘answers’ or ‘solving problems’ but on re-examining the data to see what it offers with regard to options and possibilities for each unique teacher-parent and institution.

CHAPTER 7: Emerging issues and implications

7.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies the emerging issues from the research findings and identifies the implications for teacher-parents at personal (micro) level, at institutional (meso) level and at national (macro) level. The aim of the study is to suggest a framework, at each of the levels, for modifications to and changes of existing approaches which could potentially have a positive impact on the wellbeing, effectiveness and career aspirations of teacher-parents; to offer alternative perspectives and ‘tweaks’ which have the potential to make a positive difference to the lives and work of teacher parents. Policy makers, schools and individual teacher-parents are encouraged, through these findings, to adopt fresh perspectives, as described in the quote by Calvino below:

Whenever humanity seems condemned to heaviness, I think I should fly like Perseus into a different space. I don’t mean escaping into dreams or into the irrational. I mean that I have to change my approach, look at the world from a different perspective, with a different logic and with fresh methods of cognition and verification (1988, p.7).

These modifications or changes could potentially improve the performance of teacher-parents and thereby have a positive impact on whole-school performance and on staff retention and recruitment. The term ‘fresh perspectives’, adapted from Calvino’s quote, is used when identifying factors that teacher-parents and schools might be able to influence for the better.

7.2 Fresh perspectives at micro level

Findings from this study would suggest that it is at an individual or ‘micro’ level where teacher-parents have most capacity to make changes or adjustments which can make a positive difference to their lives and careers. Making changes when simultaneously responding to the demands of both roles is, of course, extremely challenging. In order to hone in on this issue, I have identified three narratives – two from blogs and one from a focus group - which can be classed as ‘critical incidents’ and are particularly pertinent when addressing the question of how

individual teachers can – and do – successfully manage the balance between teaching and parenthood.

Critical incidents are of particular value as they offer an insight into the context and detail of the situation, the illumination of a turning point or epiphany, at the same time as being of benefit to the speaker, who is in a position to avoid directly describing painful memories and emotions.

The two most pertinent narratives both come from fathers, one in a blog and the other in a focus group, and illuminate the key themes around close family relationships, guilt, regret, and the management and passing of time that are central to these research findings. It is worth highlighting that, when it comes to recounting negative emotion and difficulties, male voices make themselves heard as much as female voices.

Tomsett (2014) recalls an event in the classroom, in which he and his students watched the film, *Death of a Salesman*:

We were watching the Dustin Hoffman film version of the play before we got to read the text. I'd never seen the play and so, with the students, was watching it for the first time. Biff's kiss and Willy's response destroyed me. I had to leave the room, weeping uncontrollably. The students were bemused whilst my colleague Jane provided me tissues in wordless confusion as I fled to an office across the corridor.

This incident is particularly significant as it shows the writer so overwhelmed by emotion that he breaks away from professional norms and conventions. It is also significant that he has chosen to publicise this incident to thousands of readers through his blog. As is the nature of many blog posts, the writer has a clear message and a strong imperative in his writing - in this case, to remind his readers of the preciousness of time and to help them to avoid the regret and guilt he felt at his sense that he had spent too much time working and not enough invested in fatherhood. Tomsett explains that the sense of having failed and it being too late to rectify the situation are the primary sources of his distress during this incident:

There was a sense of having missed out on his son's entire childhood without realising what was happening:

Between 1998, when I was appointed deputy headteacher [...] and a February day in 2011 when Miller's play awoke me, Joe morphed from a two year old toddler into a young man; metaphorically I had slept through the whole process [...] The whole sense that we can waste time without choosing and once it has passed, it's passed. How I wanted for my son something wonderful and I felt I'd mucked the whole thing up.

Tomsett goes on to use the objective correlative of his father's alarm clock to reflect the metaphorical act of 'waking up' and explains the moment as a turning point, an epiphany at which he made a conscious decision to place greater emphasis on his role as a father:

I decided that day that if either son ever asked me to do something I would do it, no matter how much work I had and I've stuck to that principle fiercely. It's meant me going to bed later, getting up earlier and doing some work stuff just well enough, but that's OK – the school's doing fine. Consequently, since that moment in my English class nearly three years ago, my relationship with Joe has, to a great extent, healed.

The second critical incident of significance to the theme of role conflict is recounted by Keith in a focus group and represents a similar moment of feeling suddenly overwhelmed and breaking from accepted norms:

When my daughter was about six, seven months old and we'd moved - and I remember that we had some family around to dinner. And I just remember feeling very stressed, and probably thinking, you know, I've got work and that's very busy, and suddenly I've got this child that I love to bits, but I'm suddenly very responsible for this child, that you know ... and they rely on me and Alison. And I must have been sat at the table, and my brother-in-law just said something like 'Are you all right?' and I don't know. He noticed something and he said, 'Let's go to the pub.' And I was like, all right, and I went. And we just started to talk and I explained how I felt, and how different my life was, and how difficult it all felt - you know, trying to juggle work and, you know, be there to help Alison and to look after my child. And he just gave me a few - because he had three children, who were there - and he gave me a few you know pearls of wisdom. You know, nothing clichéd, but it all made sense. And after that it was all better. I felt - just a sense of relief that, yes, I could manage this job and come home and still do my marking, and sometimes I could stay a bit later at work, and the world wasn't going to end. And I wasn't going to be neglecting my child, and wife, and this that and the other. Yeah. And that was a bit of sort of [whooshing noise] moment. Definitely. And I suppose it is linked into work. Yeah. Because up to that point, you would be working late at night and whilst I still work at home, I probably don't quite as much as I used. 'cause I'll think - I've gotta sort the kids out first, or help with the tea, or help with the bit of homework, or help [interruption] So I don't feel as bad about that, cause I could balance it out better.

Like Tomsett, this incident offered a turning point and a moment of relief. It would appear that the admission of not coping as well as he may have hoped brings, in itself, the beginnings of a resolution. For Keith, asking for help from a more experienced parent provided a turning point.

For Tomsett, the critical incident led to a long-term decision to change his working habits. For Keith, it was more a case of changing his perspective and letting go of some of the guilt he was feeling.

Martindale's critical incident arose at an equally unexpected moment, in her case, whilst reading an article:

Whilst doing some academic research I came across an educationalist who had written about the concept of "self-actualisation" where your motivation and determination come from within and are not influenced by external forces. It was a light bulb moment: a moment of clarity. I wanted to make all that I could of every part of my life- I had felt that for a long time that my family and teaching lives were intrinsically linked. If I separated the two, giving each a definite allocated time, I feared that I would lose from both areas.

Martindale at that point made the decision to liberate herself from the apparent 'norm' of a clear, delineated balance between work and home, instead favouring a more authentic approach which took into account her private motivations and goals.

These three narratives directly reflect the key three recommendations arising from the research with regard to making a difference at micro level:

- Management of time
- Sparing oneself guilt
- Divorcing oneself from perceived societal expectations

These three themes are reflected in other elements of the data collection. On management of time, Tim says:

You don't have to be interacting with them [your own children] the whole time – you still feel that. I think you can – you can manage your time – you can make it work – you don't – don't have to stress that you're neglecting them.

The idea that teacher-parents can and should be comfortable with being 'good enough' in each role, and spare themselves perfectionism recurs frequently in the research findings, and is summarised by Tim:

It's setting your time, and your – so you've got the right time to be with your – son, in my case – or daughter. And you've got the right quality time to plan and things – that you feel confident and comfortable with what you do at school, so that everything you're doing is [...] done to the best of your ability. I think that's all I would say. I mean, you're not going to get it right all the time – you're definitely going to get [it wrong sometimes] but also I think it's important to make time for your partner as well.

Tim brings the discussion back to the importance of valuing and nurturing close relationships, as the main source of role enrichment for teacher-parents. As well as time for your close

relationships, many teacher-parents in the study assert the importance of making time for oneself; for relaxation, exercise and sometimes simply for quiet time. Latham, in her blog (2015) is pragmatic, insisting on the importance of time for beauty treatments, exercise and being prepared to pay for a cleaner to relieve oneself of some domestic chores. There was an interesting discussion in one focus group around when and where teachers choose to complete their professional duties. Whilst participants admitted that these duties frequently impinge on family time, their right to choose when to conduct them is asserted:

Louisa: I've noticed – you know emails that come after midnight from staff? It's always the parents!

Veena: There was an email which asked us not to respond to emails after a cut off hour... and I thought, that's the time when my children are in bed – that's the only time I get to check my email!

Guilt, as the dominant theme in discussions on role conflict appears to have no useful function, either according to the research findings or to the wider body of academic research. A pernicious emotion, the experience of it, if anything, serves to further worsen the struggle many teachers feel when balancing family and work. Sylvie, parent of older teenagers acknowledges that children 'are very good at making you feel guilty', but insists that this is something we need to let go of:

I think the one thing that's important is that, we all tend to hang onto the guilt... the older they are, the more they need you, believe me.. you have to be good to yourself. If you say, now I'm doing time with the kids. It's time with the kids... and then when it's time for work, don't feel guilty! They've had their time. The problem that happens is when you start trying to do both. When you're playing with the kids, helping with homework and the mobile goes off and you know there's an email just come in, and you've got to answer that email. No! Separate. And then you're ok... ish.

For Louisa – and most of the teacher-parents in the study - feelings of guilt are sometimes unavoidable, but the key is to acknowledge them then remind yourself of your motivations and considered decisions: 'I do sometimes feel a bit guilty when I see all the other parents [at extra-curricular events]. But that's just what I do – and what I've done. And I think the girls will appreciate that...'

In terms of the theme raised by Martindale of the 'myth of balance', it is simply the case that different approaches work in different contexts. In a focus group, Ray advises: 'keep work in its box', but Eleanor disagrees: 'I was going to say the opposite. I was going to say "get them involved in your work", but I'm lucky because I've got a subject they can do that there. So they're familiar faces in school and they're involved in my work.' Once again, this highlights the

importance of identifying 'what works' for teacher-parents in their unique contexts, and then, whilst keeping guilt and self-doubt to a minimum, acting upon these decisions.

In addition to suggestions around behaviour and emotions, there were a number of practical suggestions around enhancing the balance of working and family which arose from the study. In response to the question: 'On a personal level, are there any specific changes that could be made to improve your wellbeing and your performance as a teacher?' some of the most common answers included:

- Domestic help (e.g. a cleaner)
- More sleep
- More exercise
- Less alcohol
- Get a life! 'More time for me to have an identity other than as teacher and parent'
- Healthier eating
- More reflection time
- More emotional support
- Work closer to home
- Be less of a perfectionist
- Develop ability to 'switch off'

In addition, focus group members suggested quality childcare, a shared family calendar, and time for beauty treatments and exercise.

In summary, the following implications for the individual teacher-parent arose from the study:

- On time management: make time for yourself and your partner as well as your work and your children. Sometimes just being in the room is enough.
- On guilt and perfectionism: they serve little to no positive purpose. Define what is 'good enough' for you and your family and assert your right to stick with it.
- On societal expectations: there is simply no 'one size fits all' model that teacher-parents should aspire to. Work out 'what you really want' (Cowley) with those who matter to you most and focus on aspiring to this.
- On practicalities and minutiae: make time for healthy pursuits and indulgences, as well as establishing workable routines.

7.3 Fresh perspectives at meso level

A number of key areas are identified by research participants which have the potential to make a positive difference to teacher-parents at macro-level. These have implications for institutions, and in particular for school leaders whose role in establishing and maintain a family-friendly working culture is absolutely key.

At the time of the questionnaire, 66% of respondents stated that their employer offered time off if their child was unwell. (The questionnaire did not specify whether this was paid or unpaid – this would be worth exploring further.) This would suggest that 34% of schools do not offer this – or offer it in limited form. Whilst there is an acknowledgment in this study that schools cannot afford – financially or for the sake of the students - to have employees who take advantage of such opportunities, a clear understanding between employer and employee as to what is – and is not – reasonable would, I suggest, be valued by teacher-parents.

Whilst a significant minority of the focus group participants alluded to flexible working hours, it is telling that this is not reflected to such a high degree in the questionnaire responses, and would suggest that the schools which volunteered to be involved in the focus groups do not represent the national picture and are possibly more family-friendly. 10% of questionnaire respondents stated that their employer offers late starts or early finishes to parents to help them balance work and family. Eleanor and Agnes consider the model adopted in France and Germany:

Eleanor: If there was, not a flexi-time as in you choose when you come in, but if you said right the teacher has to teach this, or be in, then some teachers could maybe do the early stint, have a break in the middle, and the late stint, and some people could do a chunk here... maybe you could have lessons, some lessons going to appear at seven or eight for some. Because it would be much easier.

Agnes: Get rid of your timetabling clashes, wouldn't it? And make other things more flexible as well.

This flexible model, whereby teachers are entitled to leave the school site when not teaching, may well be worth of consideration for schools.

The advantages and disadvantages of part-time teaching and leadership have been discussed in detail in the previous chapter. This issue became the topic of a publication in the Times Educational Supplement (Kell, 2016). Like Moreau et al (2007, p.246), my research indicated that managers at school level are very unlikely to be accepted as part-time and timetabling and

practicalities make openness to part-time hours for teachers quite daunting. However, this is a model that should be considered and could have a positive impact on overall teacher wellbeing, recruitment and retention at a time when these are a significant concern for the profession.

33% of questionnaire respondents said their schools offered them time out of the school day for their own children's extra curricular activities. This again, is a smaller proportion than reflected in the focus groups and would suggest that two thirds of schools do not offer this option. This is likely to be as the result of the possible negative impact on students in the classroom and the potentially complex implications for parity and fairness for all teachers.

18% of questionnaire respondents suggested their schools allow them to bring their own children to work if necessary. With increased regulations around health, safety and insurance, this is, again, a complex area, but it is worth noting that having this option, as with the options above, led participants to feel valued and appreciated by their employers and therefore have the potential to have a positive impact on loyalty to the school and, in the longer term, on staff retention.

In terms of practical suggestions to improved work-life balance for teacher-parents, Chhatwal (2015) makes two practical solutions worthy of consideration by schools:

One school instituted a termly "home family week". In these weeks there are no afterschool meetings, so that all staff – including senior leaders – can go home and spend time with their families. Another provided free childcare for staff and parents participating in evening events.

When asked via email after a focus group at his school about how he nurtured a 'family friendly' working culture, one headteacher wrote:

The balance of supporting staff and family life whilst maintaining the professional standards will always come back to trust and I have been taken the piss out of over the years by staff abusing that but I accept that as a necessary evil in order to run an organisation that is rooted in and by it's humanity.

There are two key terms highlighted by this headteacher: 'trust' and 'humanity'. A culture that is founded upon these principles does indeed risk being abused, but this is a price worth paying. The repeated emphasis in the data analysis on the importance of mutual trust between teachers and their managers reinforces the literature which highlights trust as central to teacher effectiveness and resilience (Hargreaves, 2001, p.523; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009, p.1065; Johnson

et al, 2010, p.7; Yin, Lee, Jin and Zhag, 2012). This school leader, in common with a significant proportion of others featured in this study places clear emphasis on the 'positive school cultures' described in Chapter 3 (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2010, p.7), and this is to their clear benefit in terms of loyalty from their colleagues.

It is important to note that a high proportion of participants in the research were keen to emphasise that they were happy with, and appreciative of, of the support offered by their schools. For example, Veena states: 'I really don't think the school could be any more supportive than it already is'. In all three contexts, there were regular mentions of how 'lucky' or 'fortunate' participants felt to work at such 'enlightened', 'progressive' and 'family-friendly' schools which clearly value the 'centrality of people' and ensure their teachers are 'valued and recognised' (Crawford, 2014, section 1), as discussed in the literature review.

In addition, though these were fewer than might have been expected, teacher-parents did acknowledge that working in schools can indeed be more conducive to family life than other professions: 'we are lucky to have the holidays' and 'the grass isn't always greener'.

Responses to the question, 'What additional practices do you think could be put in place AT YOUR SCHOOL to improve the wellbeing and performance of parents who are teachers?' broadly reflected these themes, and further offered some practical suggestions:

- On-site childcare
- Support in transition when returning to work after having a baby
- Greater culture of understanding of challenges of balancing work and family / sense of empathy
- Regular conversations about work-life balance
- Financial help with childcare
- Free ironing service at school

Though it sounds flippant, the final suggestion is one that has in fact been adopted by a headteacher and is used – and appreciated – by staff on a regular basis, with the additional benefit of supporting a local business. Two of the suggestions allude specifically to support and communication; a 'buddy' programme for teachers making the transition to parenthood would be free of cost and relatively straightforward to set up, and could comprise of more experienced parents being paired with parents of both genders to share experiences and create a safe space for discussion and reflection.

The possibility of on-site childcare was an area I actively pursued as part of this study, but was unable to access staff in a school where this has been made to work. This was seriously considered at the school where I worked in the first two years of this study, but was eventually deemed not to be cost-effective because of hefty insurance costs. This would be an area worthy of exploration in an alternative study.

On a practical level, one focus group member spoke of a school which maps out its calendar in advance, allowing families to plan their time more efficiently:

They set their calendar for the year. So all their meetings – every single meeting that they're going to have after school is set for the year, and if they're going to change that meeting, they have to have an agreement with the whole staff. So nothing's a surprise. Absolutely nothing (Sue).

With a real terms decrease in school-budgets of 15% currently coming into play, realistically, the prospects of schools offering financial support with childcare, are unlikely. However, this is an area that could be considered at national level.

More than financial considerations, working hours and paid leave, however, what emerged from the study is that it is the 'small things', the minutiae and the detail of daily interactions at work that have the biggest impact on teacher-parent wellbeing. An apparently small incident – such as leave for a child's event being denied or encouraged (as in Eleanor's case) – can have a significant impact on teacher-parents' morale and sense of loyalty and belonging in the institution, and an accumulation of such events – as in the case of SecretTeacher, will contribute to any decision to leave the school or profession, or indeed to stay and to pursue a successful career.

The significance of interactions involving kindness, humour, empathy and understanding arose repeatedly in all three areas of the data collection as having a crucial impact on teacher-parent morale, from the 'knowing look' exchanged over a sleepless night to forgetting to send your child in fancy dress for World Book Day. As facilitator to one focus group discussion on this issue, I summarised, 'so it's less about concrete policies and more about basic empathy and humanity.'

In summary, school practices and policies, including a 'no surprises' calendar, the opportunity to work flexible hours, go part-time and have paid leave to support one's own child have a significant impact on the lives of teacher-parents. Practical supportive measures, such as free ironing or the ability to bring one's child to school in an emergency, are also valued. However the

biggest single factor arising from the research as having a positive impact on the wellbeing, identity and career aspirations of teacher parents is the pursuit of a community founded on humanity and trust, where teachers feel valued as individuals. This necessitates from school leaders a skilled and emotionally intelligent handling of the delicate balance between support and accountability, whereby it is assumed that the vast majority of teachers – whether parents or not – come to work to do the best job they can, and that they will be offered every reasonable support to enable this to happen.

7.4 Fresh perspectives at macro level

Influences on teacher-parents at macro level are, as established in the data analysis chapter, broadly divided into two main categories: government policy and public perceptions and perceived or actual societal pressures.

With the increasing diversification of the schools system and funding, in many schools, no longer provided by the local authority, schools have a great deal more autonomy to decide on their own policies and working practices. However, these practices nevertheless continue to be dominated by government policy. Kay urges a re-think at both levels with regard to flexible working hours and career progression:

If a teacher wants to go part-time or have flexible working hours, that shouldn't be interpreted as a sign of weakness but as a means of being more pragmatic, as a means of being a good parent at home and still being able to show the full commitment to your work. I would really like to see more change in the mentality of ministers and schools and senior leaders where there's more flexibility for – women in particular who have much more responsible positions. I don't want schools to think now she's a Mum so she doesn't want to go up the ladder any more... I think those doors should still be open. There's no reason to think that they cannot still fulfil those duties successfully.

This in turn links to the 'ideal' of the parent who can work full time, pursue their career to its zenith and be the 'perfect' parent.

When negotiating the tricky area of leave (paid or unpaid) for teachers with, for example, sick children, Ray speculates in a similar vein that guidance needs to come from government:

It's also quite unpredictable as to what might happen. I think it might be helpful for schools to have parameters, so you know, someone is off for fifteen or twenty days, supporting their child who's ill - and it's causing a massive kind of knock on to the school, there needs to be some kind of trigger where some kind of further input is put. Because

you couldn't tolerate on a long-term basis as an employer. But actually I don't think this is a school-level sort of thing. I think this should be coming top-down from the government, personally. They will have 100% of the tax output of all the children we put into the country, so actually, the idea - almost a quid pro quo - isn't fair in itself. Because it's not an equal deal with staff who don't have children, if you follow what I'm saying. Because we're always having to negotiate, well, if I did this I could do that.

Ray goes on to touch upon an issue also raised in the questionnaire - that of more flexible parental leave and, more specifically, about how the transition back to work is handled:

[The government should provide] support for parents to bring their children up properly, really. I think you know - it's almost like maternity leave and paternity leave, there you go, you've got them out, dusted them down [...]. And now they're fine, so get back to bloody work, you know. That's, I feel, a message that's been pumped at us twenty-four seven.

This takes the discussion back to the issue of empathy and understanding which need to be modelled, not just by school leadership teams, but at government level, and which appears to be significantly lacking, according to the criticisms of the government's perceived unsympathetic and sometimes callous attitude to teachers which arises repeatedly in the questionnaire.

In response to the question, 'What do you think could be put in place at national level to improve the wellbeing and performance of parents who are teachers?' responses fell broadly into three categories: perceptions of teachers and performance measures; cultural expectations; and practicalities.

In terms of perceptions of teachers and how teacher performance is measured (as distinct from other countries such as Australia, France and Germany), questionnaire respondents suggested:

- Great respect for/appreciation of teachers
- Fewer inspections, which would result in a reduction in stress levels
- Various references to Gove, mainly suggestions of his removal...
- More praise and a sense of feeling the job you do is valued

Pressures of Ofsted (and increasingly of 'mock Ofsteds' or 'Mocksteds') are a major issue for teachers in this survey, frequently resulting in professional pressures and working hours rising far beyond the levels that are acceptable for teacher-parents and having a negative impact on wellbeing and on family life.

In terms of cultural expectations, there are a number of pertinent suggestions around gender roles and in particular around parental leave, including:

- Cultural change around perceptions of mothers and fathers who stay at home with children.
- More support and recognition for stay-at-home dads.
- Greater entitlement to parental leave for both parents

Reflecting the conclusion that it is the details and intricacies of balancing work and family that cause the greatest concern for teachers, most of the suggestions for changes at national level are practical ones, and include:

- Reduced childcare costs - free wrap-around childcare, subsidised childcare
- Longer paid maternity leave
- National alignment of school holidays
- Flexibility around holidays to avoid extortionate holiday prices – some suggest this could be unpaid
- Phased return to school after having children
- Breakfast and after-school clubs in all primary schools

7.5 Fresh Perspectives: Conclusions

Schools are awash with changes and initiatives and there is a distinct tendency in the profession to try to do too much (DeWitt, 2014), leaving individuals and institutions overwhelmed and lacking in a sense of common purpose and direction. Cowley's advice that we 'need to decide what we truly want to have' could be applied at each level: the micro or individual level, the meso or institutional level, and the national or societal level. The implications of the research findings and the emerging suggestions provide a framework in which individuals, schools and policy makers might begin to adjust, refine and focus existing practices. This may be in pursuit of a working culture which is both supportive of, and has high expectations of the performance of teacher-parents.

7.6 Gaps and possibilities for further research

A contradiction at the heart of this research for me, as insider-researcher and a pragmatist in pursuit of practical ways forward for practitioners has been the potential charge of exclusivity, of which I have been aware at various stages of the research journey. By definition, a project of this kind is required to have a sharp and defined focus – something that has been a constant challenge for me as researcher. By honing in on teachers who are parents, there has been a risk that this project has been seen as excluding teachers who are not parents: ‘what about teachers with dogs?’ enquired a colleague somewhat cynically when I embarked on my research. The focus of the project may even appear to imply that teachers who are parents are to some degree more effective than those who are not, as was hinted at by a TES article based on my emerging research findings (Bloom, 2014).

These implications were not intended. Indeed, several participant in this project were keen to emphasise their choice and responsibility to get the job done, and that they didn't feel special measures were needed for teachers who are parents – the students' learning should be the first priority. Rather, by providing a framework for schools and individuals to consider how they can support the work-life balance of teacher-parents, my hope as a school leader and comprehensive practitioner, is that this will in turn have a positive impact on all teachers in the profession; a profession which I am all too aware is at crisis point (Neumark, 2014).

Through discussions with research participants and teacher colleagues within institutions and online, a number of other research areas worthy of exploration have come to light - areas which I would have welcomed the opportunity to explore, but which fall outside the scope of this project. These include:

- An in-depth exploration of feminist perspectives on teacher-parenting.
- The experiences of former teachers, who were not included in this study.
- Teacher who are carers of dependent relatives who are not children.
- A greater focus on issues faced by teacher-parents in same-sex partnerships; these were included in the partnership but specific issues faced fell beyond the scope of the research.
- Teachers with disabilities.

- Teachers who are single parents; strikingly, whilst ONS data suggested 18% of teacher-parents are not married, cohabiting or in a civil partnership, only 2 focus group participants and 6 questionnaire respondents described themselves as 'single'. This makes the sample significantly skewed, and the reasons for this, as well as the implications for teacher-parents who are single, would be well worth exploring.
- Another area which was discussed in focus groups and seemed to regularly assert itself through the project was the impact of teaching on parenthood; how being a parent influences our expectations of, management of and relationships with our own children. This would be an area worthy of exploration.

It is my hope that by highlighting these areas and raising issues and questions that may be relevant to these, a pathway is laid out for future researchers. It is also my hope that the large volume of data collected may be of benefit to future researchers. In Appendix 8, I include a table of data from the questionnaire which indicates the different groups represented, each of whose experiences provide fruitful ground for future research.

7.7 Limitations of the research

The limitations of the research project have been explored in detail in the methodology chapter, but it is worth at this stage highlighting those which revealed themselves to be most significant in the research findings:

All participants were volunteers. This clearly lends an element of bias to the findings, as the voices that are unheard are inevitably missing from this project. Speculation suggests that these voices might be unheard for any number of reasons, including being too busy balancing teaching and parenthood to contribute or having a particularly negative perspective on the topic which they did not feel able to share.

Whilst my intention was to get a balance of male and female participants, the contributions still weighed heavily in favour of mothers over fathers.

There are references to existing or potential school and government policies in the findings which do not correspond to my area of specialism and would need further exploration before any implementation of them is considered.

The questionnaire was detailed, but the open-ended questions were left to the end and were sometimes left blank or only answered in brief. There were questions which could have been asked that may have lent greater richness to the findings. For example, 'what existing practices are effective at your current school?'

CHAPTER 8: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

In this final chapter of the study, I articulate the overarching message in response to the central questions and the subsidiary findings. I discuss the implications of this research project for individuals, schools and policy makers and make recommendations as to measures that might be put in place to potentially benefit the wellbeing, effectiveness and career-aspirations of teacher-parents and situate this study in its proper context within the body of literature that precedes it.

8.2 Answers to research questions

The study posed the central question:

What is the influence of parenthood on teacher identity, effectiveness, wellbeing and career aspirations?

As we have seen, the study involved a total of 1,648 respondents, of whom 33 were involved in focus groups, 11 were the authors of online blogs, and 1,604 responded to questionnaires. The findings of this study will be of interest to fellow parent-teachers, to school leaders, and potentially also to policy makers.

The thesis builds to the following overarching message:

Parenthood has a significant impact on teacher identity, with the vast majority of teachers questioned acknowledging a change in perspective with regard to their role in the classroom, their sense of professional vocation, and their relationships with colleagues. For most teacher-parents, there is an open acknowledgement of both positive and negative influences on their teaching role.

Key features of role enrichment, or the positive influence of parenthood on teachers, include the following:

- An enhanced sense of moral purpose in their role as teacher or leader;
- Increased efficiency and improved time-management skills and an enhanced ability to prioritise tasks;
- An increased sense of empathy and understanding with colleagues, students and parents.

Where teacher-parents experience role conflict, or struggle to balance parenthood and teaching effectively, this includes the following key features:

- Feelings of guilt and regret at neglecting family, duties at home, or indeed duties at school;
- Feelings of exhaustion due to lack of time for sleep or relaxation and/or lack of time for oneself;
- Feelings of stress and frustration at juggling the two roles and feelings of 'failure' in one or both at different times.

This study highlights that, to different degrees and depending on a variety of distinct and unique factors, these are experienced by both men and women. Where guilt features strongly in the narratives of teacher-mothers – a group, arguably, more inclined and with more opportunities to discuss such issues on a day-to-day basis - it would be erroneous to see this as an exclusively feminine phenomenon. The male experience of guilt is highlighted by a number of male participants, including Tomsett in his poignant reflections on his regret at the time spent prioritising work over family during his son's early childhood.

Where there is a distinct and undeniable gulf in experience between men and women, according to this study, is in terms of career progression. As has been discussed in detail in Chapter 6, motherhood has a stark and striking impact on career progression for mothers, with 84% of female focus group participants making explicit referencing to having suspended or abandoned their career aspirations and 80% of questionnaire respondents citing parenthood as having had a negative impact on their aspirations. This would appear to be an area in need of urgent consideration.

The study then addressed two key subsidiary questions:

What are the factors, at micro, meso and macro level, that affect teacher-parent identity, wellbeing and career aspirations, both positively and negatively?

and

Which policies and practices at micro, macro and meso level are effective when balancing parenting and teaching and how might these be developed further?

In response to the first, the concluding subsidiary findings are as follows:

1. At micro level, role enrichment relies first and foremost on a close support network founded on shared expectations and clear communication. Guilt and regret play the most significant role when role conflict occurs. At meso level, the single biggest factor affecting teacher-parents, both positively and negatively, is the culture of the institution, as led and modeled by the headteacher and leadership team. At macro level, moral purpose is the greatest enabler for teacher-parents, with a sense of unreasonable societal pressure to conform to an ideal being the greatest source of conflict.
2. In terms of enhancing and improving the balance of life and work for teacher-parents, at micro level, a pragmatic approach to the management of guilt and the nurturing of close relationships is advocated. At meso level, a shared vision and clear expectations which appropriately balance support and accountability are advocated. At macro level, clearer guidance for schools in terms of flexibility around work hours and paid leave would be valuable, together with promotion of a more empathetic and appreciative public perception of teacher-parents.

The overarching message and two key findings address the questions I established at the beginning of the study.

8.3 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

In concluding this thesis, I offer a series of recommendations which might provide a framework upon which to enhance the effectiveness, wellbeing and career-aspirations of teacher-parents.

In keeping with the rest of the study, I begin by suggesting recommendations at the micro, meso and macro levels before summarising the key themes.

8.3.1 Recommendations at micro level: close social networks

In order to maximise role enrichment, as author of this study, I offer the following suggestions, on the clear understanding that each situation is unique and there is no 'one size fits all' approach.

1. Dispense with guilt

There is no evidence in this study, or indeed in the relevant body of literature, to suggest that guilt has a useful function when balancing teaching and parenthood. A pragmatic approach is proposed, whereby teacher-parents attempt to liberate themselves from this feeling, on the understanding that neither are they alone in this, nor does it serve any useful purpose.

2. Capitalise on support available

Support, from family or close friends, on both a practical and emotional level has been shown in this study to be pivotal to enabling teacher-parents to effectively balance teaching and parenthood. It is suggested that this is nurtured and valued as far as possible.

8.3.2 Recommendations at meso level: the institution

With employing and retaining strong staff a priority for schools, and the link between wellbeing and effectiveness demonstrated by teacher-parents in this thesis, I make the following recommendations for consideration by institutions:

1. Organisation and forward-planning.

Calendared events, especially those which require commitment outside the school day, clarity, and a sense of fairness as to how the time is divided between staff is worthwhile. Meetings should be efficient, run to the scheduled timings and be clear and focused so teachers feel that they are having a direct impact on their performance in the classroom.

2. Clear and transparent policies with regard to time teachers are entitled to with or without pay for their own children's sickness or extra-curricular events. Whilst it is unreasonable and impractical to suggest schools offer limitless time for such eventualities, there is a clear message from this research that gestures such as an afternoon out for a child's assembly or paid leave for a child's illness are more likely to result in a *quid pro quo* response from teacher-parents. In return, they are likely to offer to teach an extra lesson or attend a weekend event and, in the longer term, to feel a sense of loyalty to the institution which is more likely to make them stay at the school in the longer term.

3. Consideration given to part-time and flexible working hours at all levels. As illustrated in my recent cover piece for the TES (Kell, 2016), an openness to requests from teachers at all levels for part-time or flexible working hours could potentially provide an answer to the current recruitment and retention crisis and save on school costs.

4. Working values and communication.

Most strikingly, this research reveals that day-to-day communication and the culture of the school are more likely to have a positive impact on the effectiveness, wellbeing and career progression of teacher-parents than either practicalities or school policies. A sense of being valued, challenged and supported as 'humans first' (Myatt, 2015), with the pressures and benefits that come from being a parent, is of vital importance to teacher-parents. 'The small things' were highlighted repeatedly by research participants as benefitting their wellbeing and effectiveness at work: a smile, a 'good morning', an enquiry as to the welfare of a colleague's children, a moment of solidarity or empathy. I would suggest that an explicit set of 'working values', which is shared with all staff and promotes mutual trust, courtesy, professionalism, and humanity might benefit not just teacher-parents, but the whole school community.

8.3.3 Recommendations at macro level: society and government

By offering alternative ways of thinking to schools and individuals, it is possible that this study might have the potential to affect approaches to parent-teachers at national level. I offer the following two recommendations:

1. A positive portrayal of teachers by government and media.

Negative portrayals of the profession are, according to the findings of this research, insidious and potentially contagious. Articles about the impossibility of combining teaching and parenthood, such as that from *Secret Teacher* (Guardian, 2015) are less helpful than a solution-focused approach which acknowledges the challenges of combining teaching and parenthood – and the work-life balance more broadly. An approach from policy makers and journalists which fosters such a positive approach might possibly have a positive impact on the recruitment and retention of teacher-parents.

2. A challenge to the ‘having it all’ ideal.

The idea that parent-teachers of either gender should seek perfection in every aspect of their life and work is equally pernicious. An acknowledgement at national level that ‘good enough’ (Winnicott, 1953) is likely to lead to more effective and happier professionals and parents in the longer-term is likely to be beneficial to teacher-parents.

Whilst I am aware of the limitations in scope of this research project, I remain optimistic of its potential for impact. The opportunities, many of which were serendipitous and unexpected, that have arisen as a result of this thesis have included opportunities for publication and extensive contact with fellow-teacher parents willing to share their experience and wisdom. These new contacts and opportunities to share knowledge lead me to hope and believe that the findings of this thesis might provide a positive framework within which individuals and institutions might explore new perspectives on teacher-parents. I remain hopeful that these new perspectives might lead to more sharing of excellent practice and development of new approaches which both capitalise on the benefits of - and explore resolutions to the challenges of – what are arguably, ‘the two most important jobs in the world’ (Charlie) parenting and teaching.

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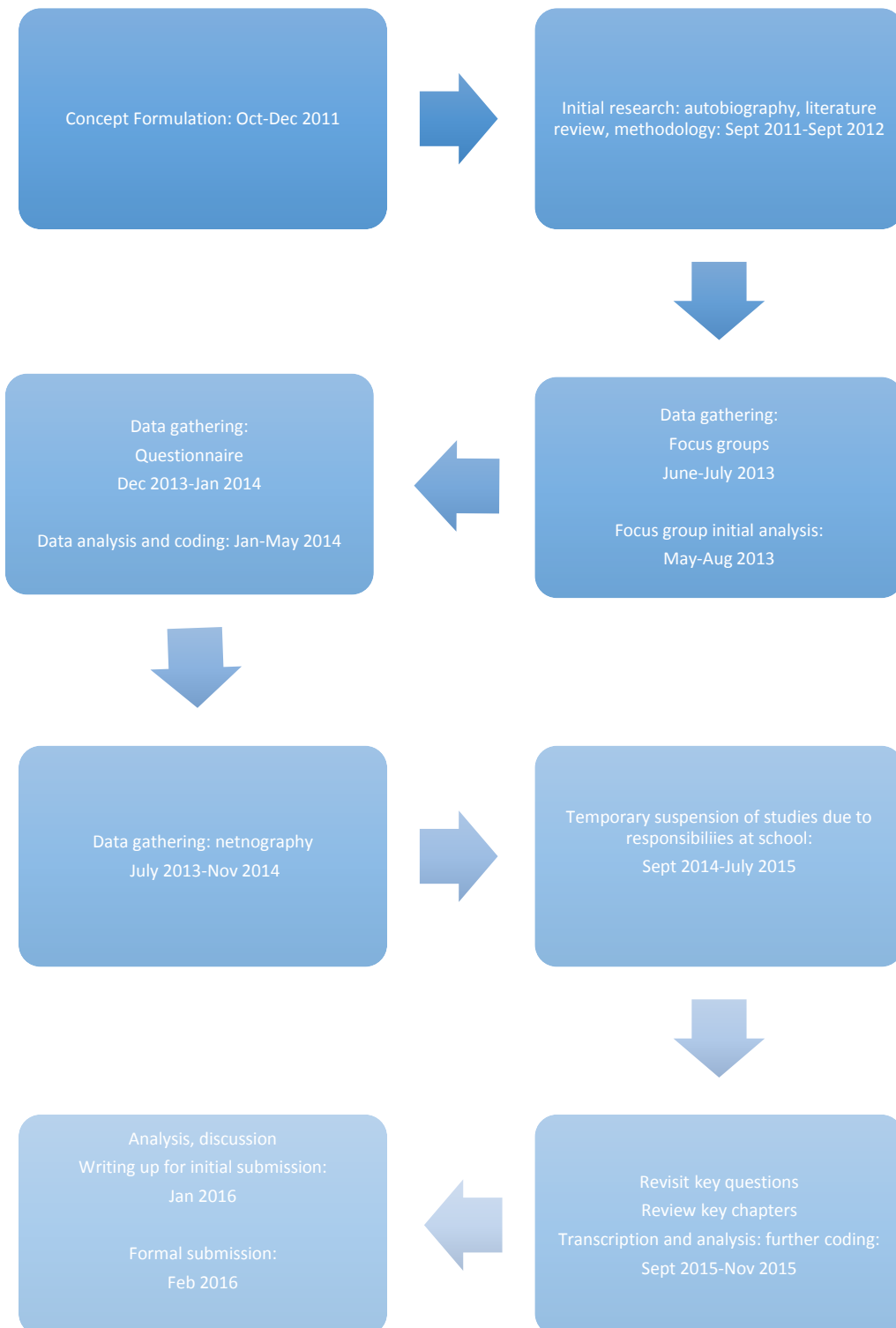
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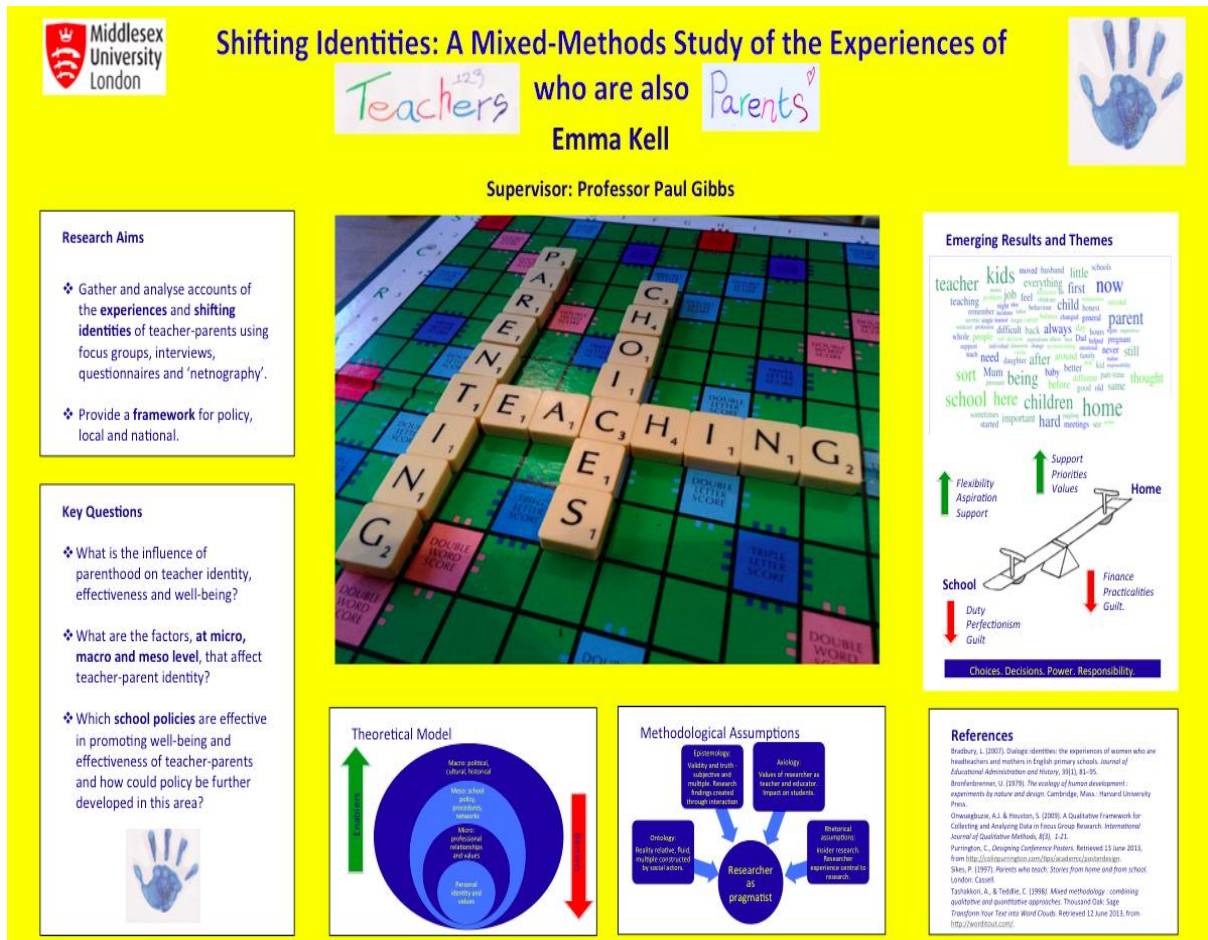
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APPENDIX 1: Timeline of the research



APPENDIX 2: Poster Presentation:
Middlesex University Summer Conference, 20 June, 2013



APPENDIX 3: Office of National Statistics Data: Teacher-Parents

Dataset: 7781 Quarterly Labour Force Survey, April - June, 2015

From: UK Data Service

Depositor: Office for National Statistics. Social Survey Division

Sample Size: 4948 (teachers)

Definition of teacher:

Work in:

- Pre-primary education
- Primary education
- General secondary education
- Techl & vocational secondary education
- Post-secndry non-tertiary education
- Tertiary education
- Sports and recreation education
- Cultural education
- Other education n.e.c.
- Educational support activities

Key:

Childr = Children

Dep = Dependent

Hhold = Household

FT = Full Time

PT = Part Time

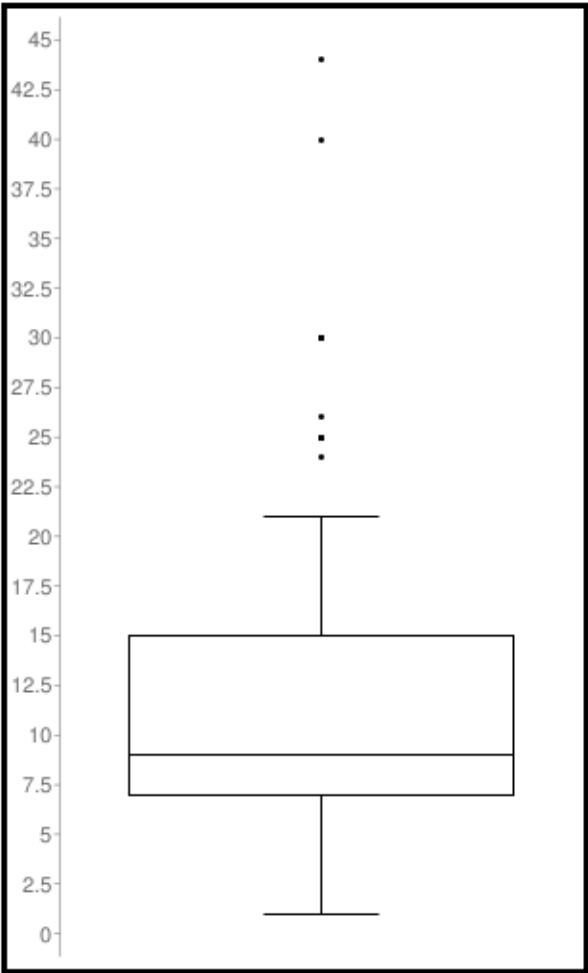
1. % teachers who have dep children.
2. % parent teachers who work part time.
3. % parent teachers who would prefer less working hours.
4. % teachers who are married/live with partner, who do **not** have children.
5. % parent teachers with young children (under 2, under 4 etc).
6. % teachers who have dep childr in household.
7. % parent teachers who would accept part time work who currently work FT.
8. % parent teachers who work flexitime.
9. % of parent teachers who work to a term time arrangement.
10. % parent teachers who work flexitime who would prefer short hours.
11. % parent teachers who work to a term time arrangement who would prefer shorter hours.
12. % parent teachers who would rather work shorter hours for less pay.
13. Mean number of fewer hours parent teachers would like to work.
14. Mean number of children of parent teachers.
15. Median number of children of parent teachers.
16. % parent teachers who are **not** living with spouse/partner.
17. Mode age of youngest child in hhold under 19 for teachers.
18. Mode age of eldest child in hhold under 19 for teachers.

1. 46.221% have dep childr under 19 in family.

From here onwards “parent teacher” is teacher who has at least one dep child under 19 in fam or in hhold. (which is 46.888% = percentage of teachers who have dep childr under 19 in hhold)

2. 43.922% of parent teachers don't work FT.
3. 28.966% of parent teachers would prefer less working hours.
4. 48.126% of married/cohabiting/civil partnership parents don't have dep childr under 19.
5. A) 6.285% of teachers have childr under 2.
- B) 14.167% of teachers have childr under 4.
- C) 30.216% of parent teachers have childr under 4.
- D) 13.405% of parent teachers have childr under 2.
6. 46.888% have dep childr under 19 in household.
7. 1.9985% of parent teachers working FT would accept to work PT.
8. 4.3534% of parent teachers work flexitime.
9. 36.9397% of parent teachers work to a term time arrangement.
10. 28.7129% of parent teachers working flexitime would prefer shorter hours.
11. 26.021% of parent teachers who work to a term time arrangement would prefer shorter hours.
12. 0.9483% of parent teachers would prefer shorter hours for less pay.
13. On average, parent teachers would prefer 10.913 (mean) hours fewer (note: not all parent teachers answered the “*how many fewer hours would you prefer*” question.) The median shorter hours preferred is 9. *
14. Parent teachers have mean average of 1.76853 childr.
15. Parent teachers have median average of 2 childr.
16. 17.974% of parent teachers are not Married/Cohabiting/Civil Partner.
17. For parent teachers, the mode age of their youngest child (dep, under 19) is 1.
18. For parent teachers, the mode age of their eldest child (dep, under 19) is 17.

Population size: 242
Median: 9
Minimum: 1
Maximum: 44
First quartile: 7
Third quartile: 15
Interquartile Range: 8
Outliers: 44 40 30 30 30 30 30 26 25 25
25 25 25 25 24





**Focus Group 1
Parent' Teachers at Hendon School
Information Sheet**

1. Study title

Shifting identities: A mixed-methods study of the experiences of teachers who are also parents

2. Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

This is a study which aims to explore accounts of the shifting identities of secondary school teachers who are also parents.

The key research question is:

What is the influence of parenthood on teacher identity, effectiveness and well-being? The study aims to answer two subsidiary questions:

What are the factors that affect teacher-parent identity?

Which school policies are effective in promoting well-being and effectiveness of teacher-parents and how could policy be further developed in this area?

The main aim of the study is a pragmatic, practical one; to gather evidence with a view to making policy recommendations which will impact positively on the well-being and effectiveness of teacher-parents.

The research will be carried out using a mixture of focus groups, interviews, questionnaires, and online forum analysis using teachers from three main sites.

4. Why have I been chosen?

I have identified you because you are a teacher and a parent or someone with a direct interest in the performance and effectiveness of teachers who are also parents and I feel that you have the potential to make a valuable contribution to this research project.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

6. What do I have to do?

You will be asked to sign a consent form before participating in the study. You will be asked to participate in a focus group which will be around 45 minutes in length. The focus group will be made of six to eight people and will be conducted in a quiet location. The interview will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher at Middlesex University, whose confidentiality can be assured.

You may also be invited to take part in a follow-up, semi-structured interview of approximately 30 minutes in a similar setting and with the same mode of transcription.

You may be invited to complete a questionnaire. This will be anonymous and comprised mainly of closed, quantitative questions.

7. What are the anticipated benefits of participating in the research?

Your participation in this research will help us to gain a broader perspective on the way teachers balance the roles of parent and teacher – both of the benefits of balancing the two roles and the problems and issues which come with being a teacher-parent. We will be looking, collaboratively, at ways in which schools most effectively support teacher-parents and directly sharing good practice between the three main institutions involved.

8. Are there any risks associated with participating in the research?

There is a small to moderate risk involved in discussing these issues as part of a group. You are free to withdraw at any point. If you feel you would be happier contributing on a one-to-one or written basis, you are free to choose this option. It is my duty as research to ensure, to best of my ability, the well-being and security of all participants.

9. Who can you contact if you have any questions about the project?

Emma Kell: kelle@hendonschool.co.uk or 07989 978 816

10. What happens if you change your mind and want to withdraw?

If you feel that after taking part you no longer wish to be part of the research and wish to withdraw your data from the interview aspects of the research then

please contact the researchers by email to withdraw from the project. I will acknowledge and respect your decision without asking any questions or asking you to justify your decision. If you do wish to withdraw your data then please let me know by 1 December 2014. After this date analysis of the data will have started and it will be difficult to extract it since it may be part of the bigger data set from the other three universities.

If you have completed an anonymous questionnaire, it will be more difficult to withdraw your contribution as you have not been identified directly.

11. What will happen to the information collected as part of the study?

The researchers will maintain confidentiality throughout this research.

If you participate in the interviews we will not identify you by name, but use a pseudonym. I will not use information which will identify you e.g. a school name or location. The transcripts will be numbered and kept on a password protected computer. Any paper copies will be kept in a secure place.

If you are taking part in the questionnaire the responses are anonymous and you cannot be identified.

You can indicate on the Consent form if you wish to receive a summary of the research findings. I can send this to you via email.

12. What will happen to the results of the research?

These will be used in my final doctoral thesis and will, I hope, provide a framework for policy recommendations at local and national level. I aim to complete a practical guide as to how to best balance the roles of teacher and parent to be distributed to teachers at local, and ideally national, level.

13. Who can you contact if you have a complaint about the project?

Please contact Emma Kell or Middlesex University's Department of Education via George Constantinou:

Senior Research Degrees Programme Support Officer
Research and Knowledge Transfer Office
Room MG03,
The Model Farmhouse
Middlesex University
The Burroughs
Hendon
London NW4 4BT

Tel: 020 8 411 6049

This project has been approved in accordance with Middlesex University's Ethical Policy Framework

Thank you for your time

Participant Identification Number:

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project:

Name of Researcher:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet datedfor the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I agree that this form that bears my name and signature may be seen by a designated auditor.
4. I agree that my non-identifiable research data may be stored in National Archives and be used anonymously by others for future research. I am assured that the confidentiality of my data will be upheld through the removal of any personal identifiers.
5. I understand that my interview may be taped and subsequently transcribed.
6. I agree to take part in the above study.

Please tick here if you would like to see a copy of the research summary.

☐

Name of participant	Date	Signature
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Name of person taking consent (if different from researcher)	Date	Signature
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Researcher	Date	Signature
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1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher

APPENDIX 5: Focus group discussion topics

Introduction, icebreaker	You have been chosen to be here because you are both a teacher and a parent. Can you briefly talk about what these roles mean to you, by way of introduction.
Tell a story to allow me to identify critical incidents	Tell us about an incident or event that made you acutely aware of being a teacher-parent on an emotional and/or practical level.
Classroom interactions – are relationships with students affected – deeper insights into students needs from being a parent OR more ruthless approach?	Does the fact that you are a parent influence your persona in the classroom?
Question to identify gender issues and highlight issues around career progression for parents.	How have your career aspirations been affected by being a parent?
To start generating a practical guide with tips on work-life balance	In an ideal world, how could schools best support teacher-parents?
Work-life balance – allowing me to identify positive and negative influences on wellbeing and performance at work	If you were explaining to a non-parent how being a parent affects work-life balance, can you give an example of something that works well and something that doesn't work so well?
Identify themes around power and responsibility	How does being a parent influence your working relationships a) with peers b) with people you manage or mentor, c) with your line manager(s) d) with parents of students
Changing dynamics, practical tips	If you could give one piece of advice to your teacher-self before you became a parent, what would it be?

APPENDIX 6: Focus Group Transcription and Analysis – a sample
Further focus group transcriptions available on request

Focus Group 2

4 June 2013 – 1.25-2.10

Participants (names to change): RPV, MSC, JCA, HLA, RHO, RGA (total: 6 – 2 male, 4 female)

Transcribed and initial notes, August 2013 (summer holiday – over ca 4 weeks)

MSC	JCA	HLA
RPV		RHO
MDE	EKE	RGA

Filmed + Maren analysis

Significant moments / themes

Key themes

Setting the tone for the group – quite rushed (lunchtime) and nervous – does this have an impact?

Men sit together

LEARNING – own and students' and own child

Overlap of two roles

Hierarchies – SLT in FG

Us / Them – teaching as prof dvpt

Use of time off – time management

Advice – taking it and listening to it

Truisms – enjoy every moment / goes so fast

Drawing lines: work/home

Juggling

BEING A PARENT CHANGES YOU – RPV 10 mins

Taking the parents' perspective

Child as part of wider network (N.B. teacher also – explore networks!)

Parents of children of different ages – different perspectives. Include?

N.B. Two other men and one woman were supposed to attend – JKA, meeting, FJO, forgot, CDO,
something more important came up

Practicalities – communication

Analyse number of words spoken- level of authority, gender etc.

Support of colleagues

T-Ps as a 'club' 15'57 RGA – risks? Elitism / cliques? Groups and identity 'crazy young crowd' 'adult club'

RGA ref to wife as 'the missus' 16'25 – gender issue? Joke? (also 'ladies first' at start)

Social life

Time with child – father, less in first year

Issues of power and role – Rhona / Rick 0.8

Part-time hours – school's flexibility

Leadership – impact of part-time teachers on students

Helen contributed lots – said afterwards it was for my sake. Relationships!
 Then/now – growing up
 FINANCE
 Career progression
 Gender issues!
 OR age that you have your child?
 Culture
 Time out to see events at your child's school – loyalty to school and practicalities – trust
 Part-time hours – impact of
 Comp corporate world
 Own child sick
 Importance of COMMUNICATION – both info and incidents at school
 Children's safety as first priority
 Applying class rules at home – and vice versa – humour (like FG1)
 Myles bite by autistic boy – mother questions school's judgement – understanding of SEN

LISTEN TO LAST 2 MINS AFTER FORMAL END!

Who	Time	Action	Script
EKE		<i>Bit officious to start?</i>	OK, Maren – I've started the time. OK?
MDE			Yeah!
EKE		Sounds quite rushed – nerves?	I'm going to give you a maximum of thirty second to answer this question, ok. So try to – to limit yourself as best you can
EKE	0"12	Reading (quite rushed) – am I showing I really want to hear what they have to say?	'You've been chosen to be here because you're both a teacher and a parent. Can you <i>briefly</i> talk about what these roles mean to you by way of introduction?'
		Pause	
RGA			Ladies first
EKE		Sets tone by asking her to go first? Power? (Also to my left)	Rhona?
RPV		A little rehearsed? Has thought about in advance? Slightly hesitant.	Umm. Parent and teacher.... I think there's a big overlap between being a parent and a teacher, in that I think much of bringing up children is about teaching your child the right things, so I – I think there's a big overlap between the two, but obviously with – my teaching is my <i>job</i> , so I have to do it. I have to be here, and I've got, therefore, certain responsibilities that belong to that. And so much of being a parent and a teacher is about living the two roles together and the compromises that have to be made on both sides.
EKE	0"50	Still a bit stilted.	Thank you. Martina?
MSC			Um... I suppose it's about the difference in numbers – ja – as a teacher we've got so many children that we're responsible for, that we have to sort of – um – are accountable for, and also have to make sure we – sort of – understand them from a social perspective, but also sort of from an academic perspective, and –

			erm – my two sons, I do know them on those two levels as well – ah, it's a sort of – over a longer period of time of that one, two child, so you see it in a different way. I don't know – I think it's numbers, but also intensity of individual contact, I suppose.
EKE			Thank you
JCA	1"25	Calm, thoughtful	Um, I'm – like you, I'm very surprised that , as a new parent of a two year old, how much overlap there is – um, for example, I'm quite shocked how I use the same tone of voice, or command, for lack of a better word with a fifteen year old as I do to my two year old son [laughs], so, and it's surprising, I think that's what makes it a parent, that we are really <i>there</i> , as a rule – um, what's the word I'm looking for – um, not just a guardian, per se
RPV	1"53		loco parentis
			- not just in the subject, but also in <i>life</i> , and becoming a wider person. Lots of things like that
EKE			Thank you. Helen?
HLA	2"06	Speaks quite fast, but articulate – has thought about this. First 'disagreement'.	Um. I think the same as everyone else, but I also think that, at home, I try <i>not</i> to be a teacher, cause I don't like to have my teacher hat on – um - for the whole of the time, I like to think I'm not a teacher at home, but just a mum, who is also – obviously I'm teaching my son at the same time, but I don't want to be in that mode of I'm talking to a class. After all I'm [?] talking to one little boy. My other thought – I've just lost my other thought. It's gone. I'll come back to it
EKE			OK, we'll come back to you.
HLA			Yeah.
EKE			OK, Rick?
RHO	2"34	Political slant. Before / after. Personal detail. Late to parenthood. Background rustling. Background quiet laughter.	Um, glibly, the two most important jobs on the planet, I would argue. I – prior to being a parent, I did genuinely, and still do genuinely feel that what we are doing is really, really important, and often undervalued by people outside of the wider profession – um – who sometimes see us as little more than babysitters, I think - um, so, yes, so, it is quite nice – you know, like before, I was relatively late, you know, coming to parenthood – late thirties, so, you know, it was nice to feel that I'd had a bit of practice, albeit, not changing any of their nappies yet – on kids that I

			could leave at the end of the day, possibly even the end of the lesson, just get rid of at the end of the lesson, so it was sort of nice to – to be able to practise a bit, but it was also vastly different when it's your own, isn't it.
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APPENDIX 7: Survey in Word format (shared with participants via SurveyMonkey)

Dear Colleague,

I am completing a Doctorate in Education on the influence of parenthood on teacher identity, wellbeing and career aspirations. If you are teaching in a state school in the UK and a parent, I would be extremely grateful if you could spare around fifteen minutes to answer this survey.

Many thanks for giving up your time for this questionnaire. The data generated will go towards my Doctoral research thesis entitled: 'Shifting identities: A mixed-methods study of the experiences of teachers who are also parents'. The views of teachers who are parents are integral to my findings, through which I hope to provide a framework for school policy at local and national level.

All responses are anonymous, and the project has been approved by the ethics committee at Middlesex University. Data will be stored securely and will be seen only by my tutors and supervisors, who will respect confidentiality and security.

I am using these questionnaires in combination with other data collection methods, including focus groups, interviews, and the analysis of online discussion forums.

You will be given an opportunity, at the end of the questionnaire, to indicate whether you would like to see a copy of the summary of findings and the final research project.

If you'd like to know more about the background to this research, and perhaps in getting more involved, please contact me on: emmakell@me.com.

Please answer ALL questions in the survey, unless marked 'optional'.

Thanks again,

Emma Kell
Assistant Headteacher
Hendon School

Introduction

Section A

1. Are you currently a parent and also a teacher working in a state-funded school in the UK?

Yes

No

2. What is your name? (Optional)

3. What school do you work at? (Optional)

4. Are you male or female?

Male

Female

5. What is your age?

18 to 24

25 to 34

35 to 44

45 to 54

55 to 64

65 to 74

75 or older

6. How many children do you have? (Include all to whom you consider yourself parent or guardian).

1

2

3

4

5+

7. What is the age of your youngest or only child?

Under 6 months

Under 1

1-3

4-7

8-11

12-15

16-19

20-25

25 or older

8. What is the age of your eldest child?

Under six months

Under 1

1-3

4-7

8-11
12-15
16-19
20-25
25 or older
Not applicable

9. Are you currently pregnant or expecting a baby?

Yes
No

10. What is the length of your teaching experience in years? (exclude career-breaks and sabbaticals where relevant):

0-4
5-14
15-24
25-34
35 or above
Other (please specify)

11. Would you describe yourself as...?

married
single
cohabiting
Other (please specify)

12. Which of the following best describes your current role?

Advanced Skills Teacher
Trainee teacher
Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT)
Support teacher
Mainscale teacher
Head of Department
Middle Leader
Senior Leader
Headteacher

13. Which of the following most closely describes the region where you work?

Northern Ireland
Scotland
Northern England
Yorkshire and Humberside
North West of England
East Midlands
West Midlands
Wales
East Anglia
London
South East of England
South West of England

14. Do you work in London or in one of the counties immediately surrounding London? (Herts, Essex, Kent, Surrey, or Berks.)

Yes

No

Other (please specify)

15. What is your MAIN subject area?

Maths

English

Arts

Foreign Languages

Humanities

Technology

Science

PE

Special Educational Needs

Pastoral / PSHE

16. What are your current contracted hours at school?

Full time

0.8 or four days per week

0.6 or three days per week

0.4 or two days per week

Less than 2 days per week

17. Thinking about your teaching job, how many hours on average per week do you spend working outside prescribed school hours?

Fewer than 5

6-10

11-15

16-20

20-25

More than 25

N/A - currently on leave/sabbatical

Section B

18. Thinking about your wellbeing and effectiveness at work, please indicate how you feel about the following statements:

Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree

1. I feel the job I do is worthwhile
2. I have emotional and moral support from colleagues
3. My family is proud of the work I do
4. I have strong classroom management skills
5. I regularly offer support to my colleagues during challenging periods
6. I do my best at work – and this is good enough
7. I can prioritise effectively at work
8. I am happy in my job
9. I feel happy/optimistic at the prospect of going to work in the morning
10. I am loyal to my employer
11. I enjoy leisure time with my colleagues
12. If money were no object, I would keep doing my current job
13. I mainly work for financial reasons
14. I have a healthy work-life balance
15. My friends are proud of the work I do
- Other

19. Of all of the statements above, which has the biggest POSITIVE influence on your wellbeing and effectiveness at work? (1-15 or 'other')

20. Thinking about your work-life balance, how do you feel about the following statements?

Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree

1. I worry about the family finances
2. I regularly feel stressed, depressed or overwhelmed when balancing work and family
3. I am under-supported by my colleagues
4. I don't feel I'm doing the job as well as I could
5. I regularly consider leaving the teaching profession
6. I regularly consider seeking a post at another school
7. I feel guilty that I'm neglecting my duties at home
8. I'm unwilling or unable to join in with extracurricular activities in the evenings and during the weekend
9. I would like to experience more of a social life with my colleagues

10. I feel I 'have a life' outside work
11. I struggle to prioritise tasks at work
12. I feel apathetic or lethargic about my job
13. I regularly feel stress or anxiety at the prospect of going to work
14. I feel physically unsafe at work
15. I don't feel challenged by my work

21. Of all the statements above, which has the biggest NEGATIVE influence on your wellbeing and effectiveness at work? (1-15 or 'other')

22. Which of the following does your employer currently offer to you in your current role – you can select more than one:

1. Part-time hours
2. Flexible working hours (e.g. late starts, early finish)
3. Time off if your child is unwell
4. Time off for extra-curricular events – Sports Day, School plays etc.
5. Support if you need time off for unexpected challenges with childcare, transport and other practicalities
6. A clear sense that your contribution is valued at work
7. The opportunity to bring your child to work where necessary
8. A clear sense that the school has a direct interest in your wellbeing and that of your family

23. Do you feel that being a parent has had any impact upon your career aspirations?

Yes

No

If possible, please provide further details.

24. Have your career aspirations been...?

Significantly increased

Slightly increased

Slightly reduced

Significantly reduced

25. Do you feel that being a parent has had any impact on your performance in your teaching role?

Yes

No

If possible, please provide further details.

26. Has your performance...?

significantly improved

slightly improved

slightly deteriorated

significantly deteriorated

Other (please specify)

27. What are your current childcare arrangements?

Wrap-around childcare (before- and after-school clubs)

Full time nursery/nanny/childminder

Part time nursery/nanny/childminder with additional help from partner/family
Partner at home full time
If possible, please provide reasons

28. Are you happy with your current childcare arrangements?

Very happy
Quite happy
Neither happy nor unhappy
Quite unhappy
Very unhappy
Other (please specify)

29. Outside work, what are the key factors that help you to combine your work and family effectively? You can select more than one.

1. Support from extended family
2. School holidays
3. Support from friends
4. Paid help with domestic chores
5. A sport or exercise to help you relax
6. A supportive partner
7. Effective childcare
8. Financial stability
9. Alcohol and/or nicotine to wind down
10. A hobby or pastime to help you relax
- Other

30. If you had to specify just ONE of these as your biggest source of support, which would it be? (1-10, other)

31. Outside work, what are the key challenges to combining your work and family life effectively?

1. Ineffective or poor quality childcare
2. Lack of sleep / tiredness
3. Household chores and responsibilities
4. Isolation / limited social circle
5. Illness of child or children
6. Concerns about your child or children's development
7. Lack of opportunity to relax
8. Lack of support / understanding from partner
9. Drinking or smoking above nationally recommended limits
10. Lack of physical exercise
- Other

32. If you had to specify ONE of these as the biggest challenge which would it be? (1-10, 'other')

33. What additional practices do you think could be put in place AT YOUR SCHOOL to improve the wellbeing and performance of parents who are teachers?

34. What do you think could be put in place AT NATIONAL LEVEL to improve the wellbeing and

performance of parents who are teachers?

35. ON A PERSONAL LEVEL, are there any specific changes that could be made to improve your wellbeing and your performance as a teacher?

Section C

36. Thinking about the influence of parenthood on teaching, please indicate your views on the following statements.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

1. Teaching is an ideal career for parents.
2. Teachers with young children / babies at home are less reliable than other colleagues
3. Having children is a barrier to teacher career progression
4. Teaching is a good profession to enter after you have had children
5. Being a mother prevents women from applying for leadership positions
6. Being a father prevents men from applying for leadership positions
7. Teaching is good training for having children
8. Having children is good training for being a teacher
9. Teachers who are parents should have the opportunity to work part-time
10. It is important for schools to plan for the long-term career progression of their staff who become parents
11. Teachers who are parents should be able to bring their own children to school in exceptional circumstances
12. Teachers who are parents should be encouraged to bring their own children into school as often as they like
13. It is possible to have a healthy work-life balance as a teacher and parent
14. It is possible to have a healthy work-life balance as a parent and senior leader in a school
15. All members of a school workforce should have the opportunity to go part-time during key periods in their lives
16. Teachers with children should be allowed extra time off work when their children are ill
17. Teachers with children should be entitled to time off for extra curricular events for their own children, e.g. Sports Days, Assemblies etc.

I am extremely grateful to you for giving up your time to complete this questionnaire. Your views are very important!

Thank you

37. Please indicate below if you would like to see:
a summary of the findings from this questionnaire
a copy of the final research project

38. If so, please provide below an email address on which you can be reached.
My email address:

APPENDIX 8: Survey sample data for future research

This appendix gives an indication of the sub-groups included in the teacher-parent survey sample and is included in the hope that it will provide useful material for future research. Further data is available on request. It should be noted that not every participant answered every question, as discussed in Chapter 5. However the weight of data was nevertheless sufficient to support the findings.

Are you currently a parent and also a teacher working in a state-funded school in the UK?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	85.8%	1375
No	14.2%	228

Are you male or female?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Male	23.6%	312
Female	76.4%	1011

What is your age?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
18 to 24	0.2%	3
25 to 34	21.0%	278
35 to 44	51.5%	681
45 to 54	22.5%	298
55 to 64	4.6%	61
65 to 74	0.2%	2
75 or older	0.0%	0

How many children do you have? (Include all to whom you consider yourself parent or guardian).		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1	29.1%	385
2	50.6%	670
3	14.6%	193
4	4.5%	60
5+	1.1%	15

Are you currently pregnant or expecting a baby?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	2.5%	32
No	97.5%	1256

What is the length of your teaching experience in years? (exclude career-breaks and sabbaticals where relevant):		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0-4	10.3%	131
5-14	47.3%	604
15-24	33.8%	432
25-34	7.1%	91
35 or above	1.5%	19

Would you describe yourself as...?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
married	83.6%	1039
single	6.1%	76
cohabiting	10.3%	128
Other (please specify)		27

Which of the following most closely describes the region where you work?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Northern Ireland	0.9%	11
Scotland	4.2%	54
Northern England	6.2%	79
Yorkshire and Humberside	7.7%	98
North West of England	9.3%	119
East Midlands	7.0%	89
West Midlands	6.6%	84
Wales	3.8%	48
East Anglia	7.8%	99
London	16.3%	208
South East of England	18.2%	232
South West of England	11.9%	152

What is your MAIN subject area?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Maths	12.1%	117
English	25.9%	249
Arts	6.4%	62
Foreign Languages	9.9%	95
Humanities	13.8%	133
Technology	4.2%	40
Science	13.2%	127
PE	4.5%	43
Special Educational Needs	7.6%	73
Pastoral / PSHE	2.5%	24
Other (please specify)		329

What are your current contracted hours at school?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Full time	72.7%	928
0.8 or four days per week	9.5%	121
0.6 or three days per week	12.3%	157
0.4 or two days per week	3.3%	42
Less than 2 days per week	2.3%	29

APPENDIX 9: Blogs and Articles Selected for 'Netnography' Analysis

Chhatwal, K. (2015). There is a 'motherhood penalty' and a 'fatherhood bonus' in school leadership. *Times Educational Supplement*. Retrieved 2 August, 2015 from <https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-views/%E2%80%98there-a-%E2%80%9Cmotherhood-penalty%E2%80%9D-and-a-%E2%80%9Cfatherhood-bonus%E2%80%9D-those>

Chivers, C. (2015). On being a teacher parent. [blog entry] July 22. *Weebly*. Retrieved July 29, 2015 from <http://chrischiversthinks.weebly.com/blog-thinking-aloud/on-being-a-teacher-parent>

Cowley, S. (2015). Having it all. *Freeing the angel*. [blog entry] July 16. *Wordpress*. Retrieved September 9, 2015 from <https://suecowley.wordpress.com/2015/07/16/having-it-all/>

FabEnglishTeacher. (2015). How parenting has improved my teaching. [blog entry] July 22, 2015. Retrieved July 29 from <http://fabenglishideas.com/2015/07/22/how-parenting-has-improved-my-teaching/>

Findlater, S. (2015). Becoming a mama – before you, my whole life was acapalla. [blog entry] July 10. Retrieved July 30 from <http://msfindlater.blogspot.co.uk/2015/07/before-you-my-whole-life-was-acapella.html>

Foster, R. (2015). Why I pay to teach... [blog entry]. May 22. *Wordpress*. Retrieved September 12, 2015, from <https://thelearningprofession.wordpress.com/2015/05/22/why-i-pay-to-come-to-work/>

Martindale, J. (2015). Why has the perfect 'work/life balance' become an undisputed, expected norm? [blog entry] July 30. *Wordpress*. Retrieved July 30 from <https://thosethatcanteach.wordpress.com/2015/07/30/why-has-the-perfect-work-life-balance-become-an-undisputed-expected-norm-a-first-blog-by-martindalejenny/>

MrSeniorLeader. (2015). How being a father has impacted on my life as a teacher and now a senior leader. [blog entry] July 21. *Wordpress*. Retrieved July 29, 2015 from <https://mrseniorleader.wordpress.com/2015/07/21/how-being-a-father-has-impacted-on-my-life-as-a-teacher-and-now-a-senior-leader/>

SecretTeacher. (2015). The working culture in teaching is impossible for mums. *The Guardian*. July 25. Retrieved July 30, 2015 from http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2015/jul/25/secret-teacher-working-culture-teaching-impossible-for-mums?CMP=share_btn_tw

Tomsett, J. (2014). This much I know about why putting your family first matters. [blog entry] January 10. Retrieved 5 August, 2015 from <http://johntomsett.com/2014/01/10/this-much-i-know-about-why-putting-your-family-first-matters/>

Wilson, H. (2015). 'Having it all' or 'the choices we make'. [blog entry] August 3. *Staffrm*. Retrieved July 29, 2015 from <http://staffrm.io/@misswilsey/8LrKsNExRN>

Wordpress user Guidelines

WordPress.com strongly believes in freedom of speech. We have a vast audience spread across many cultures, countries and backgrounds with varying values and our service is designed to let users freely express any ideas and opinions without us censoring or endorsing them. That being said, there are a few categories of content and behavior that we don't permit because we consider them harmful to the community.

To be transparent about what is and isn't allowed on your site, we've put together this set of guidelines. The following activity/material isn't allowed on WordPress.com.

Illegal content and conduct.

Self-explanatory.

Intellectual property infringement.

WordPress.com is a publishing, rather than a file sharing platform, so we recognize that copyrighted materials are often used in fair use context. We strongly support this and urge copyright holders to take this into consideration before submitting complaints. If you're not sure, a good rule of thumb is to always ask the rights holder for permission before republishing their content.

Pornography.

We know that there may be different definitions of this, but generally, we define pornography as visual depictions of sexually explicit acts. Nudity, in and of itself, is fine.

Technologically harmful content.

Please don't upload or link to malware, spyware, adware, or other malicious or destructive code.

Impersonation.

Don't claim to be a person or organization you're not. (Parody and satire are ok though!)

Directly threatening material.

Do not post direct and realistic threats of violence. That is, you cannot post a genuine call for violence—or death—against an individual person, or groups of persons. This doesn't mean that we'll remove all hyperbole or offensive language.

Posting private information.

Don't share someone's personal information without their consent. This includes collecting sensitive information in Contact Forms such as account passwords and credit card numbers, to name a couple.

Advertising.

Advertising isn't permitted unless you use WordAds or have a WordPress.com VIP or Enterprise site.

Hotlinking to WordPress.com.

Other than via VideoPress, your WordPress.com site shouldn't host files that will only be used on other sites.

Spam or machine-generated content.

You know what this is, but in general, sites such as those primarily dedicated to drive traffic to third party sites, boost SEO, phish, spoof, or

promote affiliate marketing aren't cool. We don't want you to pollute the web outside of WordPress.com either, so we ask you to please avoid sending unwanted or unsolicited promotions or emails about your site, even if it's not on WordPress.com.

Bear in mind that these are just guidelines — **interpretations are up to us**. These guidelines are not exhaustive and are subject to change.

If you believe a WordPress.com site has violated our [Terms of Service](#) or any of these policies, please [report the site](#). We review and investigate all complaints that we receive, but if and how we respond will depend on a variety of factors, such as the information available to us and the type of violation. We may also contact the site owner to inform him/her of the complaint.

If we're not in a position to make a determination (for example, whether something is [defamatory](#) or not), we defer to the judgment of a court.

The Twitter Rules

We believe that everyone should have the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers. In order to protect the experience and safety of people

who use Twitter, there are some limitations on the type of content and behavior that we allow. All users must adhere to the policies set forth in the Twitter Rules. Failure to do so may result in the temporary locking and/or permanent suspension of account(s).

Please note that we may need to change these rules from time to time and reserve the right to do so. The most current version will always be available at twitter.com/rules.

Content Boundaries and Use of Twitter

In order to provide the Twitter service and the ability to communicate and stay connected with others, there are some limitations on the type of content that can be published with Twitter.

- **[Trademark](#):** We reserve the right to reclaim usernames on behalf of businesses or individuals that hold legal claim or trademark on those usernames. Accounts using business names and/or logos to mislead others may be permanently suspended.
- **[Copyright](#):** We will respond to clear and complete notices of alleged copyright infringement. Our copyright procedures are set forth in the Terms of Service.
- **Graphic content:** You may not use pornographic or excessively violent media in your profile image or header image. Twitter may allow some forms of graphic content in Tweets marked as [sensitive media](#). When content crosses the line into gratuitous images of death, Twitter may ask that you remove the content out of respect for the deceased.
- **Unlawful use:** You may not use our service for any unlawful purposes or in furtherance of illegal activities. International users agree to comply with all local laws regarding online conduct and acceptable content.
- **Misuse of Twitter badges:** You may not use badges, such as but not limited to the “promoted” or “verified” Twitter badge, unless provided by Twitter. Accounts

using these badges as part of profile photos, header photos, or in a way that falsely implies affiliation with Twitter, may be suspended.

Abusive Behavior

We believe in freedom of expression and in speaking truth to power, but that means little as an underlying philosophy if voices are silenced because people are afraid to speak up. In order to ensure that people feel safe expressing diverse opinions and beliefs, we do not tolerate behavior that crosses the line into abuse, including behavior that harasses, intimidates, or uses fear to silence another user's voice.

Any accounts and related accounts engaging in the activities specified below may be temporarily locked and/or subject to permanent suspension.

- **Violent threats (direct or indirect):** You may not make threats of violence or promote violence, including threatening or promoting terrorism.
- **Harassment:** You may not incite or engage in the targeted abuse or harassment of others. Some of the factors that we may consider when evaluating abusive behavior include:
 - if a primary purpose of the reported account is to harass or send abusive messages to others;
 - if the reported behavior is one-sided or includes threats;
 - if the reported account is inciting others to harass another account; and
 - if the reported account is sending harassing messages to an account from multiple accounts.
- **Hateful conduct:** You may not promote violence against or directly attack or threaten other people on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religious affiliation, age, disability, or disease. We also do not allow accounts whose primary purpose is inciting harm towards others on the basis of these categories.
- **Multiple account abuse:** Creating multiple accounts with overlapping uses or in order to evade the temporary or permanent suspension of a separate account is not allowed.

- **Private information:** You may not publish or post other people's private and confidential information, such as credit card numbers, street address, or Social Security/National Identity numbers, without their express authorization and permission. In addition, you may not post intimate photos or videos that were taken or distributed without the subject's consent. Read more about our private information policy [here](#).
- **Impersonation:** You may not impersonate others through the Twitter service in a manner that is intended to or does mislead, confuse, or deceive others. Read more about our impersonation policy [here](#).
- **Self-harm:** You may encounter someone considering suicide or self harm on Twitter. When we receive reports that a person is threatening suicide or self harm, we may take a number of steps to assist them, such as reaching out to that person expressing our concern and the concern of other users on Twitter or providing resources such as contact information for our mental health partners.

Spam

We strive to protect people on Twitter from technical abuse and spam. Any accounts engaging in the activities specified below may be temporarily locked or subject to permanent suspension.

- **Username squatting:** You may not engage in username squatting. Accounts that are inactive for more than six months may also be removed without further notice. Some of the factors we take into consideration when determining what conduct is considered to be username squatting are:
 - the number of accounts created;
 - creating accounts for the purpose of preventing others from using those account names;
 - creating accounts for the purpose of selling those accounts; and
 - using feeds of third-party content to update and maintain accounts under the names of those third parties.

- **Invitation spam:** You may not use twitter.com's address book contact import to send repeat, mass invitations.
- **Selling usernames:** You may not buy or sell Twitter usernames.
- **Malware/Phishing:** You may not publish or link to malicious content intended to damage or disrupt another person's browser or computer or to compromise a person's privacy.
- **Spam:** You may not use the Twitter service for the purpose of spamming anyone. What constitutes "spamming" will evolve as we respond to new tricks and tactics by spammers. Some of the factors that we take into account when determining what conduct is considered to be spamming are:
 - if you have followed and/or unfollowed large amounts of accounts in a short time period, particularly by automated means (aggressive following or follower churn);
 - if you repeatedly follow and unfollow people, whether to build followers or to garner more attention for your profile;
 - if your updates consist mainly of links, and not personal updates;
 - if a large number of people are blocking you;
 - if a large number of spam complaints have been filed against you;
 - if you post duplicate content over multiple accounts or multiple duplicate updates on one account;
 - if you post multiple unrelated updates to a topic using #, trending or popular topic, or promoted trend;
 - if you send large numbers of duplicate replies or mentions;
 - if you send large numbers of unsolicited replies or mentions;
 - if you add a large number of unrelated users to lists;
 - if you repeatedly create false or misleading content;
 - if you are randomly or aggressively following, liking, or Retweeting Tweets;

- if you repeatedly post other people's account information as your own (bio, Tweets, URL, etc.);
- if you post misleading links (e.g. affiliate links, links to malware/clickjacking pages, etc.);
- if you are creating misleading accounts or account interactions;
- if you are selling or purchasing account interactions (such as selling or purchasing followers, Retweets, likes, etc.); and
- if you are using or promoting third-party services or apps that claim to get you more followers (such as follower trains, sites promising "more followers fast", or any other site that offers to automatically add followers to your account).

See our support articles on [Following rules and best practices](#) and [Automation rules and best practices](#) for more detailed information about how the Rules apply to those particular account behaviors. Accounts created to replace suspended accounts will be permanently suspended.

Accounts under investigation may be removed from search for quality. Twitter reserves the right to immediately terminate your account without further notice in the event that, in its judgment, you violate these Rules or the [Terms of Service](#).

APPENDIX 11: Presentations, publications and citations
Selection and samples of work by the author

Kell, E. (2014). Lessons in serendipity: the role of Twitter in my EdD journey. [presentation] 19 June, 2014. Hendon: Middlesex University Summer Conference.

Kell, E. (2014). Being a teacher – being a parent: is being ‘good enough’ good enough? *Relational Schools*, March 12. Retrieved March 13 at <http://relationalschools.org/being-a-teacher-being-a-parent-is-being-good-enough-good-enough-part-1/> and <http://relationalschools.org/being-a-teacher-being-a-parent-is-being-good-enough-good-enough-part-2-2/>

Kell, E. (2014). Joining a new senior leadership team: the dos and don’ts. London: *The Guardian*. July 18. Retrieved July 18 from <http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2014/jun/18/joining-new-senior-leadership-team-the-dos-and-donts>

Kell, E. (2014). My EdD Journey. [conference presentation] July 9. Stratford Upon Avon: Belmas.

Kell, E. (2016). Sense and flexibility: could part-time contracts for leadership positions solve recruitment and wellbeing issues in one fell swoop? January 1. London: *Times Educational Supplement*.

Kell, E. (2016). Shifting identities: a mixed-methods study of the experiences of teachers who are also parents. April 21. *BERA*. Retrieved April 21, 2016 from <https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/shifting-identities-a-mixed-methods-study-of-the-experiences-of-teachers-who-are-also-parents>

Kell, E. (2016). Workload is the tip of the iceberg when it comes to low morale in teaching. April 24. London: *The Guardian*. Retrieved April 25, 2016 from <http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2016/apr/24/workload-low-morale-teaching>

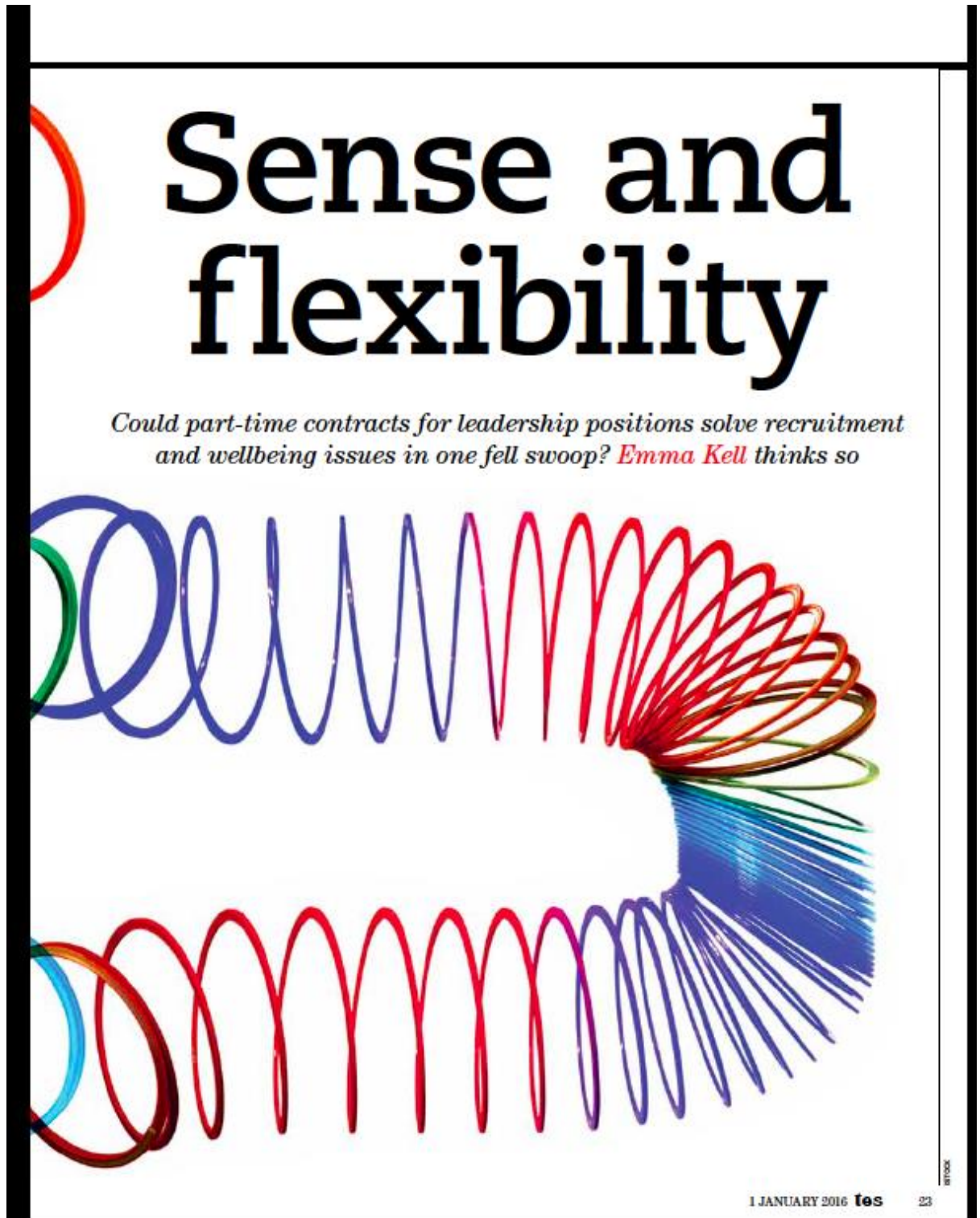
My research cited in:

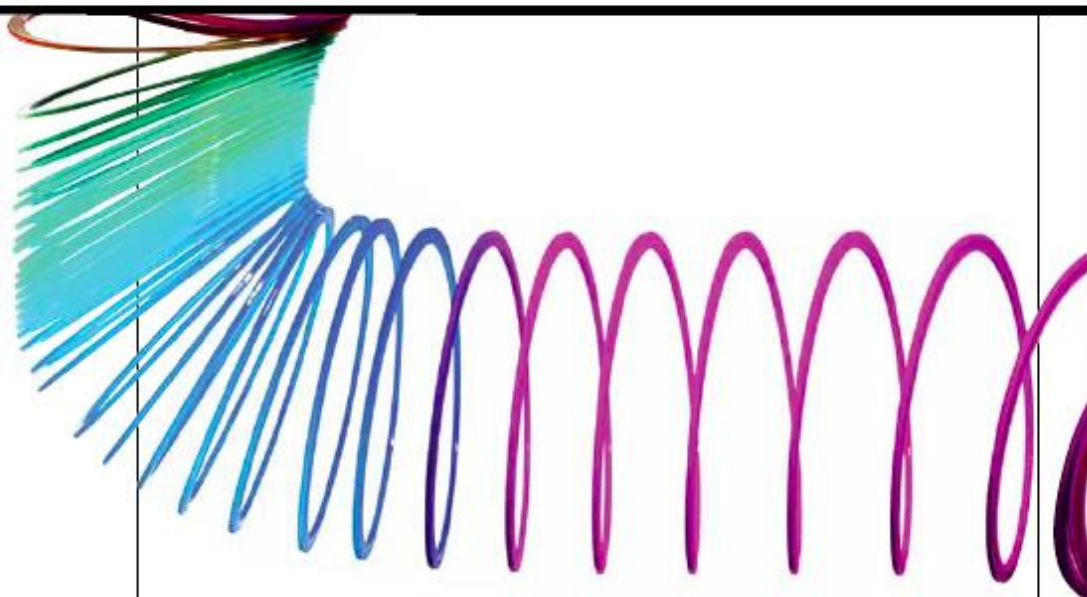
Bloom, A. (2014). Raise children and raise your game. May 23. London: *TES Magazine*. Retrieved May 24, 2014 from <https://www.tes.com/article.aspx?storyCode=6430086>.

Young, S. (2014). Can leaders shape the landscape? BELMAS members gather from all over the world to discuss this fundamental question. July 12. *Belmas*. Retrieved July 14 from <http://www.alperton.brent.sch.uk/>

Neumark, V. (2014). Teachers’ wellbeing: under scrutiny and underappreciated. *The Guardian*. July 1. Retrieved July 30, 2014 from <http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2014/jul/01/teachers-wellbeing-under-scrutiny-underappreciated>

Welham, H. (2014). Internet addiction, mixed ability classes and balancing teaching with parenthood. May 9. Retrieved May 20 from <http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2014/may/09/internet-addiction-young-people-exams-happiness>





It's 9.45 on Wednesday morning and, despite being a department head at my school, I am still sat at home. I don't have to worry about lesson planning, or marking or the development plan. I don't have to manage a whole team of teachers or large groups of students. I don't have to attend that after-school meeting that always drags on a little longer than it should. Today, I am not working. Because, as of September this year, I negotiated a part-time role for myself as a middle leader in a North London school, in order to devote myself to completing my doctoral studies.

I consider myself extremely lucky. In my 20 years of teaching and my extensive contact with teachers and leaders through educational networks, I have known very few middle or senior leaders to be part time. I am also yet to see a middle- or senior-leadership post advertised as being part time or the possibility of a job share offered. Indeed, the general perception is that leadership roles and part-time hours are incompatible.

Overwhelmingly, this affects women more. A key reason that we don't have more female school leaders is that the system is not flexible enough to accommodate a wish to be a mother and a school leader. But the implications of a reluctance to accommodate part-time work in leadership positions are broader: it curtails supply at a time when we need more leaders than ever, and it means we are shunning an option that could solve many of the issues around burnout and retention in school leadership positions.

So why is education so scared of part-time leaders?

Before going part time, I had spent four terms in a full-time senior leadership position, which meant pushing my work-life balance to the absolute boundaries of the tolerable, putting excessive strain on those who love

me and forcing me into frequent treacherous car journeys home to try to make my children's bedtime. I enjoyed many elements of the whole-school responsibility, but the cost was too great.

My current situation works much better; it has allowed me to readdress my work-life balance and given me more time to focus on my own family. But there's a sense of temporality and transience about the whole scenario.

Firstly, I'm working outside my modern foreign language (MFL) specialism: I am currently a middle

The employer's view

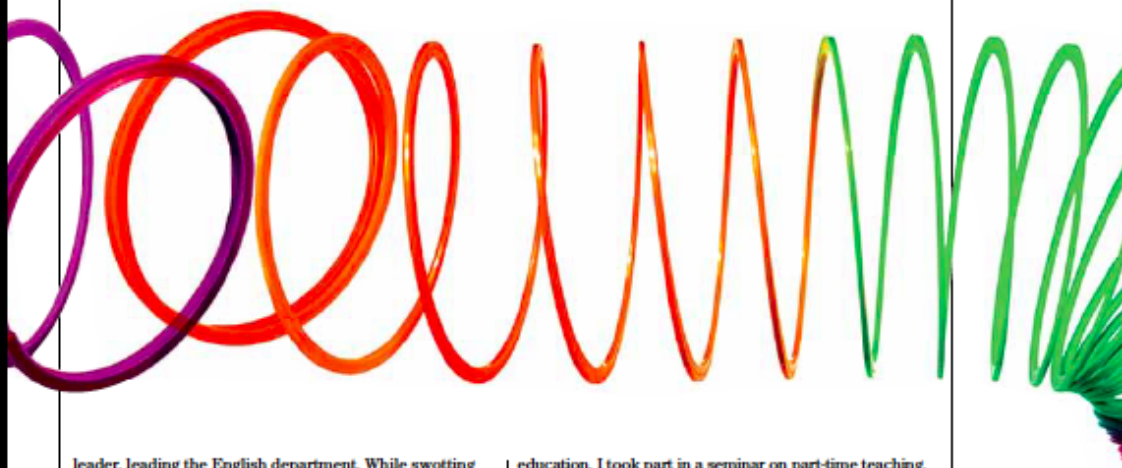
Senior leaders are not created overnight. They have spent years in the classroom and in professional development, gaining experience in a range of areas. To progress to senior leadership they also need to have delivered the goods as a middle leader – one of the hardest roles in a school. Great senior leaders are the result of investments by many different people and institutions – so I have absolutely no idea why anyone would prefer to lose such a colleague rather than simply find a more flexible way of working.

Part-time senior leaders can work really well – I am



fortunate to have a part-time assistant headteacher as part of my own senior team. When the only alternative is not having her – and trying to find a replacement – it's a no-brainer to be honest.

Keziah Featherstone is head of the Bridge Learning Campus



leader, leading the English department. While swotting up on *Julius Caesar* provided a whole new exciting level of challenge, I do rather miss my French irregular verbs and my flashcards. This situation was a result of there being no obvious part-time middle leadership roles relevant to my specialism: I had to take what I could get to work the hours I desired.

Secondly, though there are moments when I question my sanity, there's an itch to return to senior leadership and follow some of those who have inspired me by pursuing a path to headship. I want that sense of being part of the bigger, whole-school picture; of knowing the names, strengths and foibles of every staff member in the school; of formulating a vision and leading change for the better. I want to progress professionally.

Finally, because my situation is so unusual, there's a persistent sense of it being too good to be true.

Changing perceptions

According to the DfE's 2014 School Workforce survey (the most recent official source on teacher numbers), there are 3,400 part-time, FTE-qualified leadership roles in state-funded schools in England (calculated as a proportion of the full-time hours that part-time leadership teachers have worked). That's compared with 20,800 full-time qualified headteachers, 18,000 full-time qualified deputy heads and 23,700 full-time qualified assistant heads.

How many of those part-time leaders feel as I do? How many full-time leaders would want to go part time? And how many would-be leaders are put off promotion because opportunities for part-time work are so scarce? There are no statistics to answer any of these questions, but anecdotally there's one obvious response: more than you would think.

That fact became clear to me recently, when I attended WomenEd – a conference focussing on women in

education. I took part in a seminar on part-time teaching, in which the perceptions of leadership being a no-go area for part-time staff dominated the discussion.

While there were an extremely fortunate few – including a head of school with young children who was working on a job-share, and a timetabler who swore that timetabling for part timers wasn't nearly as tricky as some might claim – there was a note of frustration, sometimes bordering on bitterness, in the room. There was a prevailing sense of being undervalued as part timers, of missing out on opportunities for promotion and of being seen as less committed than full-time colleagues. We've all heard the half-joking charge of "you part timer" with all its implications of half-heartedness and lack of professionalism.

I am lucky at my school. My colleagues don't bat an eyelid at my Wednesday absence and while there has been the odd unavoidable commitment on a Wednesday, they respect my space and don't disturb me unless it's a genuine emergency.

But having researched this area, it appears that the situation is quite different for the majority. Many feel the need to justify their day off every week by assuring people of just how much they are achieving, to prove that they are not actually nipping off for a pedicure and a bit of Pilates. But if they were doing these things, or preparing for a marathon, or going on school trips with their children, or practicing their cooking skills or learning to windsurf, would it really be anybody's business? There should be no reason to be part time that is more "valid" than any other. But perceptions to the contrary damage chances of part-time leadership being offered.

The discrimination against part-time work is shown to be even more unfair when you talk to those few school leaders who are working part time. It is clear from my own experience and theirs that part-time leadership can and



does work, both for the person doing it and the school. So if the desire for part-time leaders is there and it can be a success, why aren't more schools open to the idea?

Practicality knocks

As part of research on parenthood and teaching that I am conducting on my "day off", I sent out a questionnaire – to which 1,003 parent-teachers in UK-maintained schools responded. The findings on part-time work were striking. Women are far more likely to work part time, with 33 per cent of respondents on part-time hours, compared to just 9 per cent of men. Significantly, 87 per cent of respondents feel that teachers should have the opportunity to go part time at key points in their career, such as the transition to parenthood.

There's a general feeling that a part-time option should be available in schools, but it seems that the opportunities for this option diminish with each step that teachers take up the management ladder.

In theory, the opposite should be true: it should actually be more practical for a senior leader to be part time than a mainscale teacher, as the teaching commitment is lower and the supposed nightmare of timetabling part-time classroom teachers therefore doesn't apply. But many argue that management complexity actually increases with part-time staff, for three key reasons:

1. Not everyone can be part time. A leadership team needs a balance of personalities but it can't run with every member being part time. That means being

selective about who gets to work part time, which could potentially trigger stress, anger and even an official complaint.

2. The "day off" is never actually a day off.

The demands of a leadership position require a full-time on-call role – a day off essentially becomes an unpaid work day and thus pointless. One headteacher told me that this was his major concern. For the model to work, the contribution to school life made by the part timer must be proportionate, and this can be extremely tricky to negotiate, especially with whole-school responsibilities such as teaching and learning.

3. There would be a negative impact on students.

A leader needs to be there for both students and teachers whenever they are required – be it questions about learning or urgent pastoral concerns. Part-time workers cannot fulfil that duty.

In answer to the first point, we can safely assume that not everyone wants part-time hours, and that the current first-come, first-served option seems to work OK for classroom teachers, so why not for leaders?

In answer to the second point, admittedly I have not yet had a day off that's been free of contact with school. Parental contact and urgent issues need to be resolved, as do problems around curriculum and assessment. But while work can so easily leak into our days off, with "ruthless compartmentalisation" (to borrow a phrase

The part-time headteacher

I think there are real benefits to being a part-time head. I work four days a week, including my role as director for primary at Future Leaders). For our school, this came about following the birth of my two children, and wanting to find a structure and approach that allowed me to find more of a balance between being a head and being a mummy. We created a co-headship, and I now share the role with Nicola Noble, who also works a four-day week.

The benefits are clear both for me personally and for the school. It has empowered another leader to step up into headship, but in a supportive way, and allows me to genuinely enjoy time with my young family. The power of having two heads is huge – it is an incredibly steady and resilient structure, which is so important given the challenges of running a complex urban school.

Two sets of ideas and energy contribute to a powerful partnership, and it allows us to genuinely



model a collaborative approach to leadership. There are challenges of course – how to stay in touch,

who does what, who is responsible, how to switch off. These are just some of the major issues that

my co-headteacher and I have worked through – and still have to think about. For us, the key has always been clear communication and the ability to talk about challenges when they arise.

I think it is really important for more schools to think about how they can support and facilitate flexible working. It is particularly obvious for women who choose to have children, but is also an issue more widely.

For example, we have managed to retain a really expert teacher by allowing him to work part time so that he can also pursue his other interests. We have a number of key staff who work part time, in both senior and middle management, and find that the dedication we get back in response to our flexible approach makes it more than worthwhile.

Liz Robinson is headteacher at Surrey Square Primary School, pictured feeding her daughter Alys during a coffee break at a conference at which she was presenting.

The part-time senior leader

I became part time after the birth of my second child. I was the head of English at a comprehensive school and I negotiated a Wednesday off. I always thought that I was lucky, but I think that the headteacher and the school got a very good deal, too. When I applied for promotion at a new school as an associate member of the senior

leadership team, I got the job despite wanting to stay part time. I was appointed as a lead practitioner, a director of teaching and learning with whole-school responsibility for literacy and numeracy. I work the hours of four days spread over five days. This means that I am able to take my children to school on two mornings and pick them up from school on two afternoons. It benefits my children (and there aren't

many benefits being the child of a teacher) and it gives me one hour at home on my own once a week. There is still a huge amount of juggling to do, and being part time only gives you a whisker of breathing space. During term time the job always seems to come first, and I think that is hard on your own children. Marking and working every night certainly means that your mind is not always on them, and as a senior examiner

and moderator I am pulled in other directions, too. Life operates on a very tight rein in term time and you have to be on top of everything. But I love my job and enjoy being on the leadership team in a great school. I was lucky to find a part-time post (although most of the time it doesn't feel part time). I don't think that there are enough opportunities like mine. The writer wishes to remain anonymous

from *TES* columnist Tom Bennett) and proper planning, this can and must be avoided. It is a challenge that I am still getting to grips with, but it is not impossible.

Thirdly, on the consistency point, we know that students benefit from the expertise of – and relationships with – contrasting teachers. Over-reliance on one member of staff is dangerous. If a matter is indeed urgent then systems can be put in place for the part-time leader to be contacted on their day off. But if they have done their job properly, with systems in place for unpredictable situations and proper communication on the days they do work, these urgent enquiries should be few and far between.

There is a further point for the defence worth highlighting, too. Teachers today undoubtedly work in a culture of performativity and presenteeism, where the number of hours we put in is frequently equated to our level of commitment. Stress and burnout is rife – a fact that is regularly reported in this magazine – and the profession is experiencing a genuine crisis of recruitment and retention.

In such a culture, it is not surprising that part-time working should be frowned upon: there seems to be a collective movement to drag us all down to ever longer hours and a growing belief that only with such hours can a job be done "properly".

But it strikes me that offering part-time opportunities to teachers may well be part of the solution to this unsustainable situation. Rather than fearing part-time leaders, schools should be embracing them.

There is a clear link between wellbeing and effectiveness that dominates my research, and a teacher who is fulfilled in other areas – who feels that they are giving time to their family and their interests, as well as to their work – is likely to be more efficient and more effective in the classroom.

Not only this, but the sense of loyalty that an employer's flexibility will instil in teachers by respecting their life outside school is worth a great deal – in schools that do so, staff retention is generally much higher. With supply an issue, you increase the pool of teachers you have to pick from by offering part time, too. And, with schools facing a real-terms budget cut over the next Parliament, we're also cheaper.

Is accommodating part-time leaders a challenge? Of course it is. But it's not an insurmountable one – and the many benefits of overcoming it more than make up for the difficulties. We just need a willingness among the profession to make it work.

Will this happen? I hope so. We are missing out on so many gifted leaders, at a time when there is such a dearth of them, by not being more open to part-time options in leadership positions.

We are denying these teachers the chance to fulfil their own ambitions and – just as importantly – make an incredibly valuable contribution to helping students and staff fulfil theirs, too. ●

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My research project, for a Doctorate in Education at Middlesex University, examines the experiences of teacher-parents in UK maintained schools, and poses the central question: What is the influence of parenthood on teacher identity, effectiveness, well-being and career aspirations?

The study takes as its theoretical framework an adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (1979), in order to examine the contextual factors which affect teacher-parent identity.

The study examines the positive and negative influences at micro-, meso-, and macro-level on teacher identity, well-being and career aspirations and seeks to determine which policies and practices are effective when balancing parenting and teaching and how might these be developed further.

The thesis rests on the shoulders of key authors around teacher-well-being and teaching and parenting, including Sikes (1997), Cole (2004) and Day (2007) and its approach is based on the established link between well-being and effectiveness. The original contribution of the thesis lies in the combination of teacher-as-researcher perspective, its in-depth approach to an issue only fleetingly alluded to in policy literature, and its emphasis on providing a balance of male and female voices.

What began as a single-site qualitative study quickly gained unanticipated momentum, and the research methods and methodology had to be adjusted accordingly. The voices of 1,648 teacher-parents, gathered through focus groups, 'netnography' – the analysis of online blogs and discussions – and a questionnaire.

The thesis builds to the following overarching message:

Parenthood has a significant impact on teacher identity

Parenthood has a significant impact on teacher identity, with the vast majority of teachers questioned acknowledging a change in perspective with regard to their role in

the classroom, their sense of professional vocation, and their relationships with colleagues.

Key features of role enrichment, or the positive influence of parenthood on teachers, include the following:

- An enhanced sense of moral purpose in their role as teacher or leader;
- Increased efficiency and improved time-management skills and an enhanced ability to prioritise tasks;
- An increased sense of empathy and understanding with colleagues, students and parents.

Where teacher-parents experience role conflict, or struggle to balance parenthood and teaching effectively, this includes the following key features:

- Feelings of guilt and regret at neglecting family, duties at home, or indeed duties at school;
- Feelings of exhaustion due to lack of time for sleep or relaxation and/or lack of time for oneself;
- Feelings of stress and frustration at juggling the two roles and feelings of ‘failure’ in one or both at different times.

Where there is a distinct and undeniable gulf in experience between men and women, according to this study, is in terms of career progression. Motherhood has a stark and striking impact on career progression for mothers, with 84% of female focus group participants making explicit referencing to having suspended or abandoned their career aspirations and 80% of questionnaire respondents citing parenthood as having had a negative impact on their aspirations.

The study concludes with the following recommendations, on the clear understanding that each situation is unique and there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach.

At micro-level – close relationships

1. Dispense with guilt – there is no evidence within the study or beyond that it has a useful purpose.
2. Capitalise on support available from family and friends

At meso level – within the school

1. Organisation and forward-planning make a huge and positive difference to teacher parents – calendared, efficient meetings and a shared diary are suggested.
2. Consideration given to part-time and flexible working hours at all levels. I wrote about this in a recent article for the TES. (1 Jan 2016)
3. Explicitly communication working values and transparency of communication. A sense of being valued, challenged and supported as ‘humans first’ (Myatt, 2015) is of vital importance to teacher-parents. Trust, courtesy and support are crucial.

At macro level – society and government

1. A positive portrayal of teachers by government and media.

Negative portrayals of the profession are, according to the findings of this research, insidious and potentially contagious. An approach from policy-makers and journalists which fosters such a positive approach has the potential to impact positively on the recruitment and retention of teacher-parents.

1. A challenge to the ‘having it all’ ideal

The idea that parent-teachers of either gender should seek perfection in every aspect of their life and work is equally pernicious. An acknowledgement at national level that ‘good enough’ (Winnicott, 1953) is likely to lead to more effective and happier professionals and parents in the longer-term is likely to be beneficial to teacher-parents.

I'm a doctoral researcher, a secondary teacher of languages and English of 20 years in the UK maintained sector. I'm currently leading an English department in North London and have experience as a Senior Leader and Head of Languages. I'm wife to a journalist and mother to two girls, aged eight and six. My research examines the impact of parenthood on teacher identity brings together the various aspects of my identity. I regularly publish articles and take part in TeachMeets and teacher conferences as a participant and seminar leader.